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BURT SAYRE

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TOM MOORE

Here's a health to thee, Tom Moore!

— BYRON

"THE DESIRED IDEA FAILED TO MATERIALIZE."

TOM MOORE

An Unhistorical Romance, Founded on Certain Happenings in the Life of Ireland's Greatest Poet

By THEODORE BURT SAYRE

Author of "TWO SUMMER GIRLS AND I," "THE SON OF CARLEYCROFT," *Etc.*

ILLUSTRATED

THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY LIMITED, Publishers, TORONTO

9/12

PS 3537
A87T6

To

ANDREW MACK

With the author's grateful acknowledgment and appreciation
of the convincing art and rare personal charm of
the actor who has done so much to make
"Tom Moore" a success upon
the stage

Preface

IN this book the author has endeavored to give to the reading public an intimate presentation of one of the more famous of the literary giants who made the beginning of the last century the most brilliant period in the history of English Letters since the days of the Elizabethan authors.

Of Tom Moore's rank and attainments as a poet of the finest gifts very little need be said. Posterity has placed the seal of everlasting approval upon the best of his work and in the main is admirably ignorant of his few less worthy productions. So it need not be feared that the memory of the author of " Lalla Rookh," " The Last Rose of Summer," " Love's Young Dream," and, lastly, the most tender and touching of all love songs, " Believe Me, if All Those Endearing Young Charms," will ever be less brightly preserved, less tenderly treasured, than it has been in the years that have intervened since his death.

" Moore has a peculiarity of talent, or rather talents — poetry, music, voice, all his own; and an expression in each, which never was, nor will be, possessed by another. . . . There is nothing Moore may not do, if he will but seriously set about it. . . . To me some of his Irish Melodies are worth all the epics that ever were composed," wrote the hapless Lord Byron, who was one of the gifted Irishman's most intimate and faithful friends.

"The poet of all circles and the idol of his own."

No other words could so fitly describe the position of Moore in the esteem of the public. His ballads are sung by peer and peasant, in drawing-room and below stairs, and long ago the world at large began to rival the affection and admiration with which the life work and memory of the sweetest singer of them all has been cherished by the little green island which so proudly proclaims itself as the birthplace of this, its favorite son. But of the brilliant poet's early struggles, failures, successes and ambitions little is known. From his own writings and those of Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Leigh Hunt and Captain Trelawney, it has been gleaned that there never was a more faithful friend, a more patient or devoted lover, a truer husband and fonder father than Thomas Moore. His married life was as sweet and tender as one of his own poems. Much is known of the happy years that followed his wedding, but till now no attempt has been made to picture the days of love and doubt that preceded the union which was destined to prove so splendid an example of true connubial content. In regard to historical accuracy, it is admitted that a certain amount of license has been used. For the sake of gaining continuity, events spread over a space of years have been brought within the compass of months, but aside from this concentration of action, if it may be so described, the happenings are in the main not incorrect.

While it is true that Moore was never actually ejected from society by the Prince of Wales, he did forfeit for a time the favor of that royal gentleman until the authorship of certain offensive verses was

generously acknowledged by Lord Byron. The incident wherein Moore sells his life-work to McDermot is pure fiction, but in truth he did succeed in obtaining from Longmans an advance of £3,000 for "Lalla Rookh" before it was even planned, an event which in this chronicle is supposed to occur subsequent to his rescue from McDermot by Lord Brooking. Since the advance really obtained was three times the amount he is made to demand of the Scotch publisher the possibility of this particular part of the occurrence is not to be questioned.

For certain definite and easily comprehended reasons the real degree of Moore's poverty when he arrived in London and previous to his talent's recognition by the Regent, who did accept the dedication and thus insure the success of his first volume of verses, has been exaggerated, but in regard to his possession of the Laureateship of England the story deals with fact. Nevertheless the correctness of this bestowal of favor by the Prince of Wales was publicly denied in the columns of an influential New York newspaper at the time of the play's first presentation in the metropolis. For the enlightenment of those who may have been led into error by this misstatement, at the time overlooked by the author, they are referred to letter No. 63, from Moore to his mother, dated Friday, May 20th, 1803, in the first volume of the "Memoirs, Journal, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore," edited by Lord John Russell, in which the poet gives his exact reasons for having recently relinquished the post in question.

It is also true that the first notable success of Bessie Dyke as an actress was scored at Kilkenny, Ireland,

instead of London. As her elder sister, Mary, has no part in this story, she has been omitted altogether, though her long and successful career upon the American stage is a part of the national theatrical history.

So far as the characters herein set forth are concerned but little explanation is required. Those historical have been sketched in accordance with the accounts of their peculiarities furnished by the literature of the times. Several of the most important people are entirely imaginary, or have been constructed by combining a number of single individuals into one personage.

In reply to the anticipated charge that the author cannot prove that the incidents described in the progress of Moore's wooing ever happened, he makes bold to answer that it is equally as impossible to prove that they did not.

With this explanation, necessary or unnecessary, as the future will no doubt prove, the book "Tom Moore" is confided to the mercy of the public which has so generously welcomed the play.

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THE Play, founded by Mr. Sayre on the same incidents as the novel, was produced by Messrs. Rich and Harris, with great success at the Herald Square Theatre, New York, on the evening of the Thirty-first of August, 1901, with the following cast:

TOM MOORE, Ireland's favorite poet	ANDREW MACK
PRINCE OF WALES, Regent of England	MYRON CALICE
SIR PERCIVAL LOVELACE, Boon Companion to the Prince	GEORGE F. NASH
LORD MOIRA, Moore's friend and patron	THEODORE BABCOCK
ROBIN DYKE, an Irish minor poet	GEORGE W. DEYO
SHERIDAN, the famous wit	GILES SHINE
BEAU BRUMMELL, a leader of society	HARRY P. STONE
TERENCE FARRELL, a young Irishman	FRANK MAYNE
BUSTER, Moore's servant	EDWARD J. HERON
MCDERMOTT, a publisher	RICHARD J. DILLON
SERVANT	JOHN NAPIER
MICKEY (School Children)	JOHNNY COOKE
WILLIE (School Children)	WILLIE COOKE
PATSEY (School Children)	AUGUSTUS WILKES
DICKY (School Children)	GEORGIE CADIEUX
JOHNNY (School Children)	JOHNNY WILKES
TOMMY (School Children)	HAROLD GRAU
LIZZIE (School Children)	VIVIAN MARTIN
NELLIE (School Children)	ETHEL CLIFTON
MAGGIE (School Children)	MARY MCMANUS
KATIE (School Children)	SYLVIA CASHIN
BRIDGET (School Children)	ISABEL BARRCACOLE
MARY (School Children)	LORETTA RUGE
BESSIE DYKE, an Irish girl	JOSEPHINE LOVETT
WINNIE FARRELL, an heiress	SUSIE WILKERSON
MRS. FITZ-HERBERT, the Prince's favorite	JANE PEYTON
MRS. MALONE, Moore's landlady	MAGGIE FIELDING

Courtiers, Ladies, Footmen, Servants, etc.

Book One

"The time I've lost in wooing,
In watching and pursuing
The light, that lies
In woman's eyes,
Has been my heart's undoing"

TOM MOORE

Chapter One

TOM MOORE GOES ANGLING

MR. THOMAS MOORE was certainly in a very cheerful mood. This was evidenced by the merry tune with which he was delighting himself, and a jealous-minded thrush, with head cocked on one side, waited with ill-concealed impatience for his rival to afford him the opportunity of entering into competition. As this was not forthcoming, the bird took wing with an angry flirt of the tail and mental objurgation levelled at the unconscious head of the dapper young Irishman, who lilted gayly as he wandered along the path worn in the sward of the meadow by the school children on their way to and from the institution of learning presided over by Mistress Elizabeth Dyke.

"The time I've lost in wooing,
In watching and pursuing
The light, that lies
In woman's eyes,
Has been my heart's undoing."

Moore paused in his ditty and sat down on a convenient stone, while he wiped his brow with a ragged silk handkerchief which, though of unmistakably ancient origin, was immaculately clean.

"Faith," he murmured, "there's no fiction in that last stanza. It's broken-hearted I am, or as near it as an Irishman can be without too much exertion."

He sighed almost unhappily, and drawing a knife from his breeches pocket proceeded to manufacture a whistle from the bark on the end of the long willow wand he had cut a few moments before to serve as a fishing-rod.

This last was accomplished after some little effort accompanied by much pursing of lips and knitting of brows.

His labors completed, Moore regarded the whistle with the critical approval of an expert, and putting it to his mouth blew a shrill blast. As the result was eminently satisfactory, he bestowed the toy in the crown of his beaver and, crossing his legs comfortably, proceeded to take his ease.

His appearance was decidedly attractive. While quite a little below middle size, his wiry figure was so well proportioned that in the absence of other men nearer the ordinary standard of height, he would have passed as a fine figure of a lad. He carried himself with easy grace, but affected none of the mincing, studied mannerisms of the dandy of the period. He had a round, jolly face, a pleasing though slightly satirical mouth, an impudent nose, and a pair of fine eyes, so brightly good-humored and laughingly intelligent, that no one could have looked into their clear depths without realizing that this was no ordinary youth. And yet at the period in his career from which dates the beginning of this chronicle Tom Moore's fortunes were at a decidedly low ebb. Disgusted and angry at the ill success which attended his attempts to sell his

TOM MOORE

verses to the magazines and papers of Dublin, for at this time it was the exception, not the rule, when a poem from his pen was printed and paid for, Moore gathered together his few traps, kissed his mother and sisters good-bye, shook the hand of his father, then barrackmaster of an English regiment resident in Ireland, and hied himself to the sylvan beauties of the little town of Dalky. Here he secured lodgings for little more than a trifle and began the revision of his translation of the Odes of Anacreon, a task he had undertaken with great enthusiasm a year previous. Thus it was that he chanced to be wandering through the fields on fishing bent this bright and beautiful morning in the year of our Lord 179–.

A small boy, barefooted and shock-headed, came across the meadow in the direction of the schoolhouse visible in the distance on the crest of a long, slowly rising hill. He carried a bundle of books and an old slate tightly clutched under one arm, while from the hand left disengaged swung a long switch with which he smartly decapitated the various weeds which had achieved altitude sufficient to make them worthy of his attention.

Noticing Moore for the first time, the boy's face brightened and lost its crafty look of prematurely developed cunning and anxiety, as he approached with a perceptible quickening of his gait.

"Is it you, Mr. Moore?" he said, a rich brogue flavoring his utterance.

"Unless I am greatly mistaken, Micky, you have guessed my identity," admitted the young man, making a playful slap with his rod at the new-comer's bare shins, which the lad evaded with an agility that be-

spoke practice, at the same time skilfully parrying with his switch.

"Goin' fishin'?"

"Shooting, my boy. Don't you perceive my fowling-piece?" replied Moore, waving his fish-pole in the air.

"Sure," said Micky, grinning broadly, "you will have your joke."

"None of the editors will, so, if I did n't, *who* would?" responded Moore, with a smile not altogether untinged by bitterness. "Where are you going, Micky?"

"To school, sir, bad cess to it."

"Such enthusiasm in the pursuit of education is worthy of the highest commendation, my lad."

"Is it?" said Micky doubtfully. "What 's that, Mr. Moore?"

"Commendation?"

"Yis."

"Well, if I said you were a good boy, what would that be?"

"Father would say it was a d—n lie."

Moore chuckled.

"Well, we will let it go at that. You seem to be in a great hurry, Micky."

"So do you, sir."

"Humph!" said Moore. "I perceive you are blessed with an observing mind. Have you observed the whereabouts of a trout brook that is located somewhere in this neighborhood?"

"Yis," replied Micky, himself an enthusiastic fisherman. "I have that. Don't ye know the place, Mr. Moore?"

"Not I, my lad, but, since Providence has sent you along to show me the way, I 'll speedily be possessed of that knowledge."

Micky looked doubtfully in the direction of the schoolhouse. It was almost time for the afternoon session, but the day was too beautiful to be spent in the dull depths of the school without regret.

"I 'd show you the way, sir, gladly, but it 'll make me late."

"Are you afraid of Mistress Dyke?" queried Moore, noticing the boy's hesitation.

"Yis, sir."

"So am I, my lad."

Micky looked surprised. That this dashing young blade in whose person were apparently embodied all the manly virtues, at least from the lad's point of view, should stand in dread of such a soft-eyed, red-cheeked little bundle of femininity as his schoolmistress was a matter beyond his juvenile comprehension.

"And why, sir?" asked the boy curiously.

"She 's very pretty," replied Moore. "When you are older you will understand what it is to be in awe of a trim little miss with the blue sky in her eyes and a ripple of red merriment for a mouth. In the meantime you shall show me the way to the brook."

"But she 'll lick me," objected Micky, numerous ferulings keenly in mind.

"Not she, my laddybuck. To-day I 'm coming to visit the school. Tell her that and she 'll not whack you at all."

"Won't she?"

"No, she will be so pleased, she will more than likely kiss you."

"Then why don't you go and tell her yourself? You would like the kiss, would n't you?"

"Micky," said Moore solemnly, "you have discovered my secret. I *would*. Ah me! my lad, how little we appreciate such dispensations of Providence when we are favored with them. Now you, you raparee — you would much rather she did n't practise osculation upon you."

Micky nodded. He did not understand what his companion meant, but he was quite convinced that the assertion made by him was absolutely correct.

What a beautiful thing is faith!

"A pretty teacher beats the devil, Micky, and you have the prettiest in Ireland. I wish I could be taught by such a preceptress. I 'd need instruction both day and night, and that last is no lie, even at this day, if the lesson were to be in love," he added, a twinkle in his eyes, though his face was perfectly sober.

"Sure," said Micky, "she don't think you nade lessons. I heard her tell Squire Farrell's daughter blarney ran off your tongue like water off a duck's back."

"What is that?" said Moore. "I 'll have to investigate this matter thoroughly."

At this moment the metallic clang of an old fashioned hand-bell sounded faintly down the hillside mellowed into comparative melodiousness by the intervening distance.

"Ah," said Moore, "your absence has been reported to Mistress Dyke, and she has tolled the bell."

It seemed as though the young Irishman's execrable pun decided the ragged urchin that the way of the transgressor might be hard, for, without further hes-

itation, he took to his heels and fled in the direction of the schoolhouse.

After a moment's thought Moore followed him, beating time with the willow fishing-rod to the song which half unconsciously issued from his lips as he turned his steps in the direction of the headquarters of Mistress Bessie Dyke.

Tom Moore was going angling, but not for trout.

Chapter Two

CERTAIN HAPPENINGS IN MISTRESS DYKE'S SCHOOL

OVER her desk, waiting for developments, leaned Mistress Dyke. A moment passed, then the tousled head of the tardy Micky appeared above the level of the bench behind which he had secured shelter after carefully crawling on hands and knees from the door, having by extreme good fortune, made the hazardous journey undetected. Only the fatally unwelcome interest displayed in this performance by the red-headed boy on the front row prevented the success of Micky's strategy. As it was, the blue eyes of Bessie met his with a glance of reproof as he slid noiselessly into his place.

"Micky."

The boy rose reluctantly to his feet.

Bessie looked at him severely. To his youthful mind she appeared very stern indeed; but, if the truth were known, to the ordinary adult eye she presented no fiercer exterior than that ordinarily produced by a slight feeling of irritation upon the aspect of a kitten of tender age. Smiles always lurked in Bessie's big blue eyes, and little waves of mirth were ever ready to ripple out from the corners of her mouth at the slightest provocation, so it can readily be understood that it was no easy task for her to sternly interrogate

the freckle-faced youth who, beneath her disapproving gaze, shifted uneasily from one bare foot to the other.

Mistress Dyke ruled by love, and if she did not love by rule, it is merely another instance where exception can be taken to the old saw which so boldly and incorrectly states that a good maxim must of necessity be reversible.

"Why are you late, Micky?" demanded Bessie.

"Sure, mistress, I dunno," was the hopeless response.

"You don't know, Micky? How foolish!"

"Yis 'm," assented Micky. "I was foolish to be late."

Bessie smiled and then tried to deceive the school into the belief that it was only the beginning of a yawn by patting her mouth with a dimpled palm. The school knew better and anxiety grew less.

"But there must be some reason for it," she persisted.

"I know," said a little lad with long yellow curls, which were made doubly brilliant by the red flannel shirt that enveloped him, materially assisted by diminutive trousers, with a patch of goodly proportions upon the bosom. "I saw him goin' fishin' wid Mr. Moore."

"Tattle-tale! Tattle-tale," came in reprimanding chorus from the other pupils. Dicky, quite unabashed by this disapproval, made a gesture of defiance and returned to his place. Unfortunately the copper-tipped brogan of one Willy Donohue, who chanced to be sitting immediately in the rear of the youthful informer, was deftly inserted beneath Dicky as he started to seat himself.

The result of this was that the cherubic Richard

arose, with an exclamation of pain and surprise, much more quickly than he sat down.

"Dicky, you may remain after school. I want no tell-tales here," said Bessie.

"Teacher, Willy Donohue put his foot in me seat," expostulated Dicky, on whom the lesson was quite thrown away.

"Willy shall stay after school, also."

"Ah-h-h!" remarked Dicky, mollified at the prospect of his unkind fate being shared by an old-time enemy.

"I wish you wuz big enough to lick," growled Willy, under his breath. "Your own mother would n't know you after the flakin' I 'd give you. I 'd snatch you baldheaded, baby."

Dicky turned his head far enough over his shoulder to prevent Mistress Dyke from observing the protrusion of his tongue, and was so unlucky as to be hit fairly in the eye with a paper pellet, amply moistened, propelled with all the force the vigorous lungs of the prettiest girl in school, aided by a tube of paper torn from the back of her geography, could impart to it.

"Teacher, Milly O'Connor hit me in the eye wid a spit ball," snivelled Dicky, who, being of tender years, did not share in the general masculine scholastic worship of the youthful belle, who was admired and fought over by the larger boys, on whom she bestowed her favors quite impartially.

"Oh dear!" sighed Bessie. "Was there ever such a lot of children? Milly, rise."

Milly stood up without any visible sign of contrition or embarrassment. She was a pretty, dark-

curled lassie of ten, dressed neatly and becomingly, which made her doubly prominent in her present surroundings, for most of the children were of such poverty-stricken parentage that the virtue possessed by their wearing apparel consisted almost entirely in sheltering and hiding rather than ornamenting their small persons.

"What shall I do to punish you?" asked Bessie, wearily.

"You might ferule her, teacher," suggested Dicky, good-humoredly coming to the rescue.

"Dicky, mind your own business," said Bessie severely, "or I 'll ferule *you*. Now I shall punish you both. Milly, kiss Dicky immediately."

"I don't want to kiss a tattle-tale," said Milly, who placed fully the proper valuation on her caresses.

"Exactly," said Bessie. "This is a punishment, not a reward of merit."

"Not for Dicky," corrected Milly. "He will like it, teacher."

But here the little lady was in grievous error, for when she, resignedly obedient, approached the small rascal, he promptly burst into tears and, dropping on the floor, hid his head under the bench. This was more than Bessie had bargained for, and she was about to motion Milly to return to her seat when Patsy, a youth with carroty red locks already mentioned, rose from his place on the front bench, burning with the noble flame of self-sacrifice.

"She can kiss me instead, teacher," he announced heroically, "and you can let Dicky off this time."

Bessie laughed outright in spite of herself, but Milly, regarding Patsy's suggestion as nothing short of pos-

itive insult, turned her back on the admiring gaze of the gallant youth.

"I think we will excuse you, Patsy. Dicky is punished sufficiently, and I fancy Milly will behave herself in the future."

Patsy sat down with a gulp of regret, not comforted by Milly's whisper:

"I 'd do anything rather than kiss that red-headed monkey."

Micky, to whom she had imparted this welcome information, nodded approval.

"Wait till I catch him after school," he murmured hostilely. "I 'll dust his jacket for him."

Meanwhile Bessie had rescued Dicky from his grief and apprehension, and, when the curly-headed youth had had his nose blown and resumed his seat, school assumed its wonted quiet until the sight of a tiny mouse nibbling a bit of cracker under an unoccupied bench drew forth a scream of terror from Milly, who considered herself entitled by age to the enjoyment of all the follies peculiar to her sex.

"A mouse!" she shrieked. "Oh, teacher, teacher, save me!"

And she immediately sought a position of safety upon the seat.

Pandemonium broke loose. The other little girls not to be outdone became equally as frightened, and followed Milly in her ascent, an example which was most shamefully emulated by Bessie herself, with her desk as the base of operations.

Patsy plunged headlong in the direction of the small disturber bent on demolishing it with his geography. The other boys were equally prompt in following the

chase, with the exception of Micky, who, realizing this was an excellent opportunity for administering a rebuke to his latest rival's amatory ambition, stepped quickly behind his enemy and kicked him in the place handiest at the time with an enthusiasm worthy of a better cause. Patsy, justly aggrieved, abandoned the pursuit, and, rising to his feet, smote Micky in the neck with a force that jarred him mentally as well as physically. Retaliation followed in a swinging blow on Patsy's snub nose, and a clinch ensued which continued in spite of Bessie's desperate remonstrances until Tom Moore put his head in the window, realized the necessity for prompt action, ran to the door, entered, and, seizing the combatants by their collars, tore them apart by main strength.

Chapter Three

TOM MOORE ENTERTAINS TEACHER AND PUPILS

MOORE held the boys at arm's length, thus frustrating their desperate attempts to continue the battle, and glancing up at Bessie, who was still perched on the desk, favored her with a look of mingled astonishment and admiration.

"What a nice quiet time you have been having! Quite like a baby Donnybrook," he remarked cheerfully. "Are you trying to fly, Bessie, that you are up so high?"

"Oh, Tom, you came just in time."

"That is a habit of mine," replied Moore, and then, turning his attention to his prisoners, he continued:

"Now, my bully gladiators, what is the cause of this gentle argument?"

"Misther Moore, he said I looked like a monkey the other day," answered Micky, harking back to an insult that had long rankled in his memory.

"He kicked me, he did," said Patsy, "and I gave him a oner in the neck for it, I did."

"Red-head!" ejaculated Micky in tones of scorn. "He wanted Milly to kiss him, the puckorn!"

"Which is Milly?" inquired Moore, scanning the other scholars interrogatively.

"I am," answered that young lady, delightfully free from embarrassment.

"I don't blame you at all, Patsy," observed the poet regarding the youthful belle with approval. "Are you desperately fond of her?"

"To be sure," responded Patsy, valiantly. "I 'm going to marry her."

"As though I 'd marry *that,*" remarked Milly, in accents by no means admiring.

"Never mind that, Miss Milly! An honest man's love is not to be scorned even when it 's in short breeches," said Moore, reprovingly. "So it is jealousy that is at the bottom of this quarrel? Faith, I 'll settle it right here. Neither of you lads shall have Milly. I 'll marry her myself."

"All right," said Milly, cocking her eye at Bessie, "if teacher has no objection, I have n't."

"What an idea!" ejaculated the schoolmistress, descending from her desk. "Tom, how can you talk such nonsense?"

"Don't mind her, Milly. It 's only jealousy," said Moore. "Boys, this fight is postponed till after hours." Then he added, in a whisper, "I 'll referee it myself. Go to your seats."

"Each of you boys will remain in an hour after school is dismissed," said Bessie, severely.

Moore stepped quickly to the desk where she had seated herself preparatory to continuing the session.

"Oh murder, no!" he expostulated in an undertone. "How can I talk to you, Bessie, if they are here?"

"Do you wish to talk to me, Mr. Moore?" asked the guileless maiden, as though surprised.

"I am dying to, Bessie," said he.

"On second thoughts, boys," she announced, "since Mr. Moore has interceded for you, you need not stay in, but there is to be no more fighting after school. I don't like quarrelling."

"Then you have made up your mind to be an old maid, have you?" murmured Moore.

Bessie tossed her head disdainfully.

"Are you sure the mouse is gone?" she asked, evading the question.

"I think I see it there," exclaimed Moore. "Look out, Bessie!"

"Oh!" cried the girl, relapsing into fright and seizing hold of her companion for safety's sake. "Don't let the horrid thing come near me!"

Moore chuckled and released himself from her appealing grasp.

"Please be more respectful, Mistress Dyke," he said reprovingly. "I 'll not have you seizing hold of me like this. It is entirely too familiar treatment for a young unmarried man to submit to at such short notice and unchaperoned. Have you no bringing up at all? What do you suppose my mother would say if she thought I permitted you to take such liberties?"

"Oh, never mind your mother," said Bessie pettishly, deciding that she was in no particular danger at the present moment.

"That is nice advice to give a young lad," commented Moore, drawing a rose from his button-hole. "See, Bessie, I have brought you a posey, the last blossom on the bush. Some day, if I have the time, I shall write a poem on the subject."

"Thank you, Tom."

As she spoke, Bessie put the flower in a glass of

water on the desk that already held a bunch of clover plucked for her by the grimy fingers of one of her pupils.

Dicky stood up and raised his hand.

"Please, teacher," he lisped, "is Mr. Moore going to sing for us?"

"Sure as life," said Moore, his vanity tickled.

A murmur of approval came from the children. The young Irishman had amused them with his fine voice more than once, extracting in return from their evident enjoyment quite as much pleasure as his music afforded them.

"What shall it be, teacher?" he asked, turning to Bessie.

"Oh, anything but one of those odes from Anacreon, Tom. They are simply terrible."

"But you read them all."

"I blush to admit it," answered the girl, frowning at his lack of tact in recalling such an indiscreet proceeding.

"Ah, Bessie," he murmured tenderly, "I'd admit anything for the sake of seeing the roses steal in and out of your dear cheeks. Why, it is like watching the sunset sweeping over the clouds in the west on a summer evening."

"Sing, Thomas Moore," commanded the girl, but a softer look came into her eyes as she settled comfortably back in her chair to listen.

"I 'd like to pass my life singing to you, Bessie."

"That 's all very well, Tom, but the notes from your throat are not taken at the bank."

"Well," retorted he, cheerily, "to get even, it is not many bank-notes I take."

Moore, after fetching a high stool from a distant corner of the room, perched himself upon it and began to sing, the school-room echoing with the clear ringing voice that was destined in after years to be the delight of the most fashionable circle in Europe. He had selected an old ballad setting forth the emotions felt by a world-worn traveller as he threaded the streets of his native village after years of wandering abroad, and, as the chorus was composed of the various song-game rhymes sung by the children in their play, it was quite familiar to the pupils of Mistress Dyke, who joined in heartily.

"Ready," cried Moore, beckoning the children from their places. "Now, all together.

"'I came to see Miss Jenny O'Jones,
Jenny O'Jones, Jenny O'Jones,
I came to see Miss Jenny O'Jones,
And how is she to-day?'"

Hand in hand the children, their shrill voices raised tunefully under the leadership of Moore, marched gayly forward and back, the poet prancing as joyously as any of them, as he beat time with a ruler.

"Second verse," he said, and, enjoying every note, sang it through to the huge delight of his audience, who, when the chorus was reached a second time, danced around him in a circle, their pleasure proving so infectious that Bessie herself deserted her desk to take part in the wind-up, which was both uproarious and prolonged.

"That will do you," said Moore, mopping his face with his handkerchief. "Faith, it is great fun we have been having, Bessie."

"'READY', CRIED MOORE, 'NOW, ALL TOGETHER.'"

"So it appears," she replied, rapping on the desk for order.

"You have a fine lot of pupils, Bessie. I'd like to be father of them all."

"Mr. Moore!" exclaimed the girl, horrified at such a wish.

"I mean I'd like to have a family as smart as they look," explained Moore, helping himself to a chair.

"That would not require much effort," replied the girl, coldly.

"But it would take time," suggested the graceless young joker. Then he continued, as Bessie gave him a freezing glance, "I mean, never having been married, I don't know, so I will have to take your word for it."

"You deserve to be punished for your impudence, Tom Moore."

"Since I'm a bachelor, that is easy brought about, Bessie."

"Who would marry such a rogue as you?"

"I'm not going to betray the ladies' confidence in my honor by giving you a list of their names," replied Moore, virtuously. Then he added softly:

"I know something — I mean *some one* — I deserve, whom I am afraid I won't get."

"Sooner or later we all get our deserts," said Bessie, wisely.

"I want her for more than dessert," he answered. "For three meals of love a day and a light lunch in the evening."

"It is time to dismiss school."

"I am not sorry for that; send the darlings home."

"And another thing, Tom Moore, you must never

come here again during school hours. It is impossible to control the children when you are around."

Moore laughed.

"You had them nicely controlled when I arrived, did n't you?" said he. "Oh, well, I 'll come later and stay longer. Dismiss them."

Bessie rang the bell, and school broke up for the day immediately.

Chapter Four

THE BLACKMAILING OF TOM MOORE

AFTER bidding good-bye to the visitor most of the children crowded noisily out of the door, rejoicing at their resumption of freedom, but Patsy, he of the red hair, seated himself deliberately on the front bench and immediately became deeply interested in his arithmetic, his presence for the moment being completely overlooked by Moore, whose attention was attracted by the attempt of a ragged little miss to make an unnoticed exit.

"Little girl," said Moore, gently, "why are you going without saying good-bye to me? What have I done to deserve such treatment from a young lady?"

The child thus reproached, a tiny blonde-haired maiden, dressed in a faded and ragged frock, looked timidly at her questioner, and flushed to her temples.

"I thought you would n't want to say good-bye to me, sir," she answered, shyly.

"And why not, alanna?"

"'Cause I 'm poor," she whispered.

A tender look came into Moore's eyes and he crossed to the side of the child, his generous heart full of pity for the little one's embarrassment.

"I 'm poor, too," he said, patting her yellow curls. "Where do you live, my dear?"

"Down by the Mill, sir, with my auntie."

"And is this the best dress she can give you?" he asked, trying the texture of the little gown and finding it threadbare and thin.

The child looked down at her feet, for the moment abashed, then raising her eyes to the young man's face, read only sympathy and tenderness there, and, thus encouraged, answered bravely:

"It is better than *hers*."

"Then we can't complain, dear, can we? Of course not, but is n't it very thin?"

"Yes, sir, but I would n't mind if it was a bit more stylish."

Moore looked at Bessie, smiling at this characteristic manifestation of femininity.

"The size of her!" he said. "With a woman's vanity already."

Then, turning to the child again, he continued:

"Well, we poor people must stick together. I 'll call on your aunt to-morrow."

"Will you?" cried the girl in delight. "And you 'll sing to us?"

"That I will," said Moore, heartily. "Now run along like a good girl, and mind me, dear, never be ashamed of your honest poverty. Remember that the best man of us all slept in a manger."

"Yes, sir," responded the child, happily, "I 'll not forget."

As she started for the door Moore called her back and put a shilling in her little pink palm.

"What will you do with it?" he asked, chucking her under the chin.

"Buy a ribbon, sir."

"A ribbon?" echoed Moore in imitation of her jubilant tone.

"For me auntie."

"Bless your generous little heart," said Moore, drawing another coin from his pocket. "There is the like of it for yourself. Buy one for each of you. Now off you go. Good-bye."

The child ran lightly to the door, but, as she reached the steps, turned, as though struck by a sudden thought, and beckoned to Moore.

"You may kiss me, sir," she announced with as much dignity as though she were bestowing upon her benefactor some priceless gift, as indeed she was, for certainly she possessed nothing more valuable. Then, after he had availed himself of her offer, she courtesied with childish grace and trotted gayly off, her two precious shillings tightly clutched in her hand. Believing himself to be alone with Bessie, Moore hastened toward her with outstretched arms, but was suddenly made aware of the presence of a third party by Patsy, who discreetly cleared his throat as he sat immersed in his book.

Moore turned to Bessie.

"What is that lad doing there?" he whispered. "Does n't he know school is over?"

"How should I know?" she answered, though a glint of fun in her eyes showed she was not without her suspicion as to the reason of Patsy's presence.

"You might ask him what he wants," she suggested encouragingly.

"I will," said Moore, approaching the interrupter of his wooing with a disapproving expression upon his face.

"Look here, my son, don't you know school is dismissed?"

"Yis, sir," replied Patsy, loudly.

"And yet you are still here?"

"Yis, sir."

"Bad luck to you, can't you say anything but 'Yis, sir'?"

"No, sir," responded Patsy, not at all intimidated by Moore's glowering looks.

"That is better," said Moore. "You are going home now?"

"No, sir."

"There you go again! Faith, I wish you would say 'Yes' and stick to it. What are you doing here at this unseasonable hour?"

"I wish to study me lessons," replied Patsy, enthusiastically.

Fairly dashed, Moore returned to Bessie.

"I never saw a lad so fond of his books before," said he.

"It is a new thing for Patsy," said Bessie with a laugh. "There is no bigger dunce in school."

"Is that so?" asked Moore. "Faith, I 'm beginning to understand."

Patsy looked sharply over his book at the young poet.

"Can't you study at home, my lad?"

"No, sir."

"Will you never say 'Yes, sir,' again?"

"No, sir."

"Now look here, my young friend, if you say 'Yes, sir,' or 'No, sir,' again I 'll beat the life out of you."

"*All right,* sir," responded Patsy, plunging his face still deeper into his book.

Moore regarded his small tormentor with a look of dismay.

"You will strain your eyes with so much study, Patsy," he said, warningly. "That is what you will do, — and go blind and have to be led around by a stick, leaning on a small dog."

A suppressed giggle from Bessie drew his attention to his mistake.

"It's the other way round I mean. Aren't you afraid of that sad fate, my bucko?"

Patsy shook his head and continued his energetic investigation of his arithmetic, while Moore sought counsel from the schoolmistress, who was keenly enjoying her admirer's discomfiture.

"What will I say to the little tinker, Bessie?" he asked, ruefully.

"How should I know, Tom? I am his teacher and will have to help him if he wishes it."

"What is it troubles you?" demanded Moore, looking down on Patsy's red head.

"A sum, sir," replied Patsy.

"Show it to me."

The boy designated an example with his finger.

"'If a man sold forty eggs at one ha'penny an egg,'" read Moore from the book, "'how many eggs —'?"

Shutting up the arithmetic, he put his hand in his pocket and jingled its contents merrily.

"Is the answer to this problem sixpence?" he asked.

"Oh, no, sir," replied Patsy ingenuously.

"What is, then?" demanded Moore, baffled.

"Two shillings," announced the graceless youth.

"I 'll give you one," said Moore, suggesting a compromise, but Patsy was not to be so lowered in his price.

"*Two* is the answer," he replied in a determined tone.

Moore yielded without further protest and produced the money.

"There you are, you murdering blackmailer," said he. "Now get out before I warm your jacket."

Patsy seized his books, and, dodging a cuff aimed at him by his victim, ran out of the schoolhouse with a derisive yell.

"Bessie," said Moore, solemnly, "that little spalpeen will surely come to some bad end."

"And be hanged?" asked the girl, taking a handful of goose-quills from her desk preparatory to sharpening them into pens with an old knife drawn from the same storehouse.

"Or get married, my sweet girl, though they say death is better than torture," replied Moore, approaching the schoolmistress. "Do you know it cost me two shillings to get a talk with you?"

Bessie smiled and finished a pen with exquisite care.

"Talk is cheap," she observed, carelessly.

"Whoever said that never called at your school, Bessie Dyke," said Moore, perching himself upon her desk. "Turn your face a bit the other way, if you please."

As he spoke he took the girl's round chin in his hands and moved her head until only a side view of her pretty face could be obtained from his post of vantage.

"Do you like my profile so much, Tom?" she asked, submitting docilely to his direction.

"It's not that, Bessie," answered Moore, "it's because I can't stand *two* such eyes *at once*. Now there is but one of them looking at me. And such an eye! My heart's jumping under my jacket like a tethered bullfrog with the glance of it. Ah, Bessie, there is only one in the wide world like it."

"And where is that?" asked the girl, a shade of jealousy perceptible in her inquiry.

"Just around the bend of your nose, mavourneen," laughed Moore. "Filled with melted moonshine are both of them. Sure, one soft look from those eyes would make a cocked hat out of starlight."

"Would it?" murmured Bessie, charmed in spite of herself. "Do you really mean all you say?"

"Mean it? It's poor justice my words do your beauty, Bessie dear. You have the sauciest, darlingest, scornfullest nose, and such a mouth! Why, to look at it makes my lips pucker."

"A lemon would do the same," observed Bessie, foiling Moore's attempt to snatch a kiss by sitting back in her chair. "You need not think I believe all your nonsense, Thomas Moore."

"Don't you believe what I have just said, Bessie?"

"Not I. You need n't flatter yourself."

"Why need n't I? Will you do it for me?"

"I have something better to do," replied Bessie, paring another quill with much vigor.

"That is what I call a cutting remark," said Moore, looking at the knife.

Bessie sighed, and temporarily abandoned her labors.

"Tom Moore," she said solemnly, "why will you make such awful puns?"

"Practice makes perfect, my dear. If I keep on, some day I may make a good one."

"I wonder if there ever was a good pun?"

"Keep on wondering. You look like an angel pondering over the fit of her wings."

"Tom, that is sacrilegious."

"You 're wrong, Bessie, it 's only poetry."

Bessie frowned. Like all good women, she did not like to hear religion spoken of lightly, so she rebuked the erring Thomas with a glance.

"You are pretty even when you frown, Bessie," remarked the unregenerate versifier.

Bessie attempted to look doubtful as to the truth of this last statement.

"Why should n't you believe me? Has n't your mirror showed you day after day what I am telling you?"

As he spoke Moore took her hand in his, not noticing that one slender finger was wound round by a bandage. Bessie gave a little cry of pain.

"What is the matter?"

"You hurt me," she answered, exhibiting her finger.

"I 'm more than sorry, Bessie, but what ails your pinkie?"

"I burned my hand."

"Shall I burn the other for you?" asked Moore, extending his in invitation.

"How could you?" she demanded, suspecting a trap.

"Why," said Moore, "with a kiss *half* as warm as my heart."

Bessie giggled, then tried to resume her dignity, but

Moore had no intention of letting such an advantage pass unutilized, and, seizing her uninjured hand, planted a hearty smack in its warm palm.

"*Mr. Moore!*"

"Mistress Dyke!"

"I shan't allow you to stay here if you cannot behave in a sensible manner," she threatened.

"I 'm not sensible?"

"Not now."

"Then, if I am not sensible, I am unconscious, and, if I am unconscious, I am not responsible for what I do."

Moore with this justification made a sudden attempt to embrace Bessie, who, always prepared for such lawlessness, evaded his outstretched arms and retaliated by pricking him with her knife, a proceeding which resulted in the instant removal of the poet's person from her desk, accompanied by an ejaculation that sounded suspiciously like profanity.

"What did you say, Tom?" asked Bessie with a gurgle of satisfaction. For once she had the better of her resourceful admirer.

"You will have to guess that, Bessie," he remarked. "Do you think that is a nice way to treat a young man?"

"Oh, it was only a joke," said Bessie, quite unrepentant.

"Your jokes are too pointed," said Moore. "After this please refrain from any that are sharp enough to go clean through doe-skin breeches and I 'll thank you."

The door opened suddenly and Dicky, still resplendent in red shirt and golden curls, appeared, carrying

a book. He halted on the threshold and looked inquiringly at his teacher.

"Egad, it's the cherub!" exclaimed Moore.

Taking courage, Dicky toddled in, book in hand, and approached Moore, who gazed wonderingly down at him.

"Well, my lad, what do you want?"

"Please, sir," piped Dicky, "I wants help wid me lessons," and he held up his book. Bessie stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth to smother her laughter, while a look of understanding came into Moore's eyes.

"Oh, you want help, do you?" said the latter.

"Yis, sir, wid me aris'metic," announced Dicky, laboring earnestly to bring forth the big word and catching some of the edges with his teeth in spite of the exertion. "It's a sum, sir."

"A sum indeed?" echoed Moore.

"Yis, sir, and the answer is one shillin', sir."

Moore looked over at Bessie, who almost choked and had to seek relief in coughing. Then he regarded the recently arrived blackmailer with a glance that he vainly endeavored to make severe, but Dicky perceived the twist of mirth at the sides of his victim's mouth, and took heart accordingly.

"A shilling, my young Jack Sheppard?" said Moore, feeling in his pocket. "I'll give you a sixpence."

"Patsy said it was a *shillin'*," insisted Dicky, stamping his feet by way of emphasis.

Moore yielded in shameful defeat.

"There you are, you highwayman, and you tell Patsy I'll flake him when I catch him again," he said, handing out the desired coin. "You see that door?

Well, get through it as quickly as you can, or I may do you bodily injury."

Dicky fled wildly across the school-room with Moore galloping at his heels, then the door shut with a bang, and the pair were alone again.

Chapter Five

TOM MOORE GIVES MISTRESS DYKE AN INKLING

MOORE regarded Bessie with a glance of reproving indignation, which was quite lost upon the young lady.

"I'm in a den of thieves, I am," he remarked, sternly. "Bessie, I half believe you put those lads up to that same game. What share do you get? Half, I'll wager."

"When do you go back to Dublin, Tom?" asked the girl, waving aside his insinuation with a flirt of her handkerchief.

"I don't know," responded Moore. "I should be there now."

"Should you, Tom? What is keeping you, then?"

Simple child! She, of course, had not the slightest suspicion that she was in any way concerned in the poet's prolonged tarrying at Dalky. Innocence is a truly beautiful thing, and that it is not more popular is much to be regretted.

"Keeping me?" repeated Moore. "Nothing but my heart, mavourneen."

"Indeed? Who has it in their possession, if it is no longer in yours?"

"You, Bessie," answered Moore, earnestly. "And pray do not return it. After being in your keeping,

no other woman would satisfy it, and I 'd have no peace at all. Ah, alanna, when I left Dublin, weary and discouraged at my failure to sell my poetry, and came to this quiet country place in search of rest, it is little I dreamed I would run across such a girl as you. You have put new thoughts in my head, Bessie. My soul is not the same at all."

Touched by the tenderness of his tone, the girl grew sober in her turn.

"And you *must* go, Tom?" she asked, regretfully.

"I have my fortune to make, Bessie. Why, mavourneen, I have n't a penny of my own."

"And no pennies of anybody else's?"

Moore smiled broadly.

"How could I have?" said he. "I never went to school here. I don't know the system like your pupils."

Bessie laughed and looked so tempting in her mirth that Moore made another attempt to kiss her, with no better success than had rewarded his previous efforts.

"Poverty is a common complaint," she observed, shaking her head at the disappointed youth.

"I had rather be poor than a miser," said Moore, sitting down on a stool.

"A miser? Am I one?"

"Yes, with your kisses. Faith, they are spoiling to be picked."

"I am the best judge of when and by whom they shall be picked, good sir," replied Bessie, pensively nibbling on the end of a brown curl.

"It is hard to be poor, Bessie," sighed Moore, resting his feet on a rung of the stool, his elbows on his knees, and his chin in his hand, this being a favorite attitude of the poet's.

"If you would marry Winnie Farrell you would have slews of money," suggested Bessie, leaning on the back of the bench with affected carelessness of demeanor, but there was a gleam in her eye, hidden 'neath drooping lids and long lashes, that seemed indicative of no little interest in the forthcoming answer.

Moore looked inquiringly at his fair companion.

"Winnie Farrell is it?" he said, laughing at the idea. "Not for me, Bessie. I have picked out another lassie."

"But I 'm told you often call at Squire Farrell's," persisted the girl, not wholly reassured.

"To be sure I do, Bessie," replied Moore frankly. "And no wonder. The Farrells are pleasant people. Winnie is nice to chat with, and I like her brother. He is the cleverest lad in the country."

Bessie shook her head doubtfully, and a sunbeam that, slanting in the window, had comfortably nested in a coil of her bonny brown hair was rudely thrown forth to find no better resting-place than the floor, for the girl moved nearer to Moore as she spoke.

"He is too clever for his own good, I fear," she said. "The fewer dealings you have with Terence the better it will be for you."

Before Moore could reply the door opened, and Patsy, Micky, and Willy Donohue filed in, each clutching an arithmetic.

"Look, Tom," said Bessie, pointing out the newcomers.

Moore regarded the little party with wide-open eyes.

"Egad, Bessie," said he, "it 's a committee. What do you lads want now?"

"Please, sir," said Patsy, acting as spokesman, "these two boys wants help wid their lessons. They each has a sum, sir, and their answer is sixpence apiece."

"Come here, then," said Moore, sweetly, "and I 'll hand it to you."

The boys, made confident by past successes, came forward without hesitation as their victim put both hands in his pockets.

"It is a long worm that has no turning," remarked Moore, seizing Patsy by the collar with one hand, while with the other he picked up the ruler from the desk. "This is where Thomas Moore worms — I mean turns. There is sixpence where you won't lose it, my lad."

The dust flew from Patsy's breeches, while from his mouth proceeded vigorous objections to his present treatment.

"Now run, you divil, or I will repeat the dose," cried Moore, throwing the ruler at Micky's bare shins as that youthful conspirator sought safety in headlong flight with Willy before him and Patsy close at his heels. A moment later they appeared outside the window and retaliated with derisive gestures for their recent defeat until Moore ran towards the door as though about to give chase, when the lads, squealing with fright, fled across the fields, disappearing in the distant trees.

"How do you like teaching?" asked Bessie, mischievously, as Moore returned.

"Fine," he said. "Fine, and it 's I that pays the fines, little limbs of Satan."

"Remember, you are speaking of *my* pupils, Mr. Moore," she said threateningly.

There was a short silence. For a moment Bessie hesitated between anger and apology, then her real regard for Moore triumphed and she decided not to torment him further.

"Tom," she said softly.

Moore showed no sign of having heard her.

"Tom," she said as sweetly as a deliciously modulated voice could sound the word.

Still no reply. She stepped lightly towards him.

"Tom, dear, don't be sulky," she said, laying one hand upon his sturdy shoulder. "Why I care more for your little finger than I ever could for Sir Percival."

"Will you tell him so?" asked Moore, taking her hand as he rose.

This was asking entirely too much and Bessie raised her head very haughtily, indignant that her condescension in making so confidential a statement had led to such an extravagant request.

"Indeed, I will *not*," she declared, defiantly, returning as she spoke to her chair behind the desk at the front of the schoolroom. Moore followed her and they stood face to face, the desk between them.

"Very well," he said determinedly, "if you won't, I will."

"If you dare, Thomas Moore," cried Bessie, shaking one pink forefinger at the poet, admonishingly. "*If you dare!*"

"Faith, I dare do anything," he replied, and, seizing her hand, plunged the lifted finger up to the second joint in the contents of the inkstand, thus effectually ending the argument.

"Oh!" cried Bessie, holding her hand, so the jetty

"I CAN'T WASH IT OFF, TOM MOORE."

fluid would not fall upon her gown or apron. "You horrid, horrid thing, see what you have done!"

Moore laughed heartily at her discomfiture, and in so doing recovered his usual cheerful spirits.

"Oh, the ink will wash off," he chuckled. "That is more than the mark you have left on my heart will do, for that is indelible."

Bessie stamped her tiny foot in her rage and made as though she would wipe her hand on Moore's coat, which caused the triumphant young man to seek sudden shelter behind the benches.

"I can't wash it off, Tom Moore."

"Have you never been taught to perform your ablutions, Bessie?"

"Stupid! My other hand is burned and water will make it smart."

"I wonder if water would make me smart."

"*I'd* like to," said the girl.

"I've always tried wine when I thought I needed intellectual stimulation."

"I should think you would be drinking all the time," said Bessie, spitefully.

"Not *all* the time," corrected Moore. "Part of it I spend earning the price. There, now, don't worry, I'll scrub your little fist for you if you will let me. Will you?"

Bessie's anger cooled as rapidly as it had warmed.

"If you will be very gentle, you may."

"Trust me for that," said Moore, going to the bucket that stood in the corner with a basin covering it. "It's empty, Bessie. There is not as much water here as would make a foot-bath for a flea."

"You can fetch it from the well," said Bessie.

"Will you come with me?"

"You can go alone, Tom Moore."

"I can, but I don't want to, Bessie."

"You would be almost there now if you had n't stopped to talk."

"Won't you come, Bessie?"

"I suppose I will have to do it to please you," said the girl, yielding with a little sigh.

"Won't it please you, too?" said Moore, stopping her.

"But, Tom —"

"Won't it?" he insisted.

"Yes, — yes, — *yes!*" she replied, with increasing emphasis on each reiteration.

Moore let her pass, and she paused at the door, looking over her plump shoulder.

"What a child you are, Tom Moore!"

"Child," he repeated. "Child? Maybe I am, Bessie, but when you are called 'Mama' it won't be by me, though I think I 'll not be far off."

"Oh!" she cried, and slammed the door.

Chapter Six

TWO GENTLEMEN OF WEALTH AND BREEDING

IT is doubtful if a search prosecuted through the entire extent of the United Kingdoms over which the Prince of Wales ruled as Regent would have brought forth a more debonair or contented individual than Sir Percival Lovelace, gentleman, libertine, and chosen comrade of His Royal Highness. In the eyes of this gallant, morals were a mark of ancient barbarism that gentle breeding and a long line of ancestors should be expected to remove or render forgotten. As these views coincided almost exactly with those cherished by the First Gentleman of Europe, it is not to be wondered that the Prince found in the baronet an agreeable and, more than that, an amusing companion. But even London may pall upon one and, not being hampered by the restrictions limiting the peregrinations of royalty, which were often the cause for much princely profanity at Carlton House, Sir Percival sought change and diversion in a jaunt through Scotland and Wales, finally ending in a tour of Ireland, where, much to his surprise, he stumbled upon certain persons destined to furnish him with more or less food for thought for the next year or two. His companion on his travels was none other than Lord Brooking, nephew of Lord Moira, already known as

one of England's most capable statesmen. The young gentleman first mentioned was quite popular in the Regent's set, but more widely known in the circles from whence the various arts drew encouragement and patronage. But, in spite of his leanings toward the more cultured pursuits scantily patronized by the profligate society immediately surrounding the Regent, Lord Brooking was much more popular with that noble gentleman than many whose daily and nightly labor was the effort to curry favor with England's ruler. Lord Brooking was no ordinary personage. There was small flavor of the roué in his character, though it cannot be denied that, following the general current of fashion, he had not hesitated to play his part in the masque of dissipation offered as entertainment to the middle and lower classes by the aristocracy whom they were expected to envy and admire. But in his heart he felt only regret for his own participation in such unworthy extravagance, and, in most instances, a profound contempt for those who found diversion and contentment in such existence. There were two conspicuous exceptions to his lordship's general condemnation. The first was Richard Brinsley Sheridan, poet, dramatist, and statesman, now in his decadence, who still sought and furnished entertainment in society, a garrulous, drunken, and witty old gentleman, with a heart as young and a thirst as dictatorial as when Fame first brought him well-merited reward. The only enemies owned by this lightsome veteran were those foolish enough to expect eventual settlement of bills or loans that they were so unwise as to allow him to add to his long list of personal indebtedness. It is almost unnecessary to mention that disappointment

was the subsequent conclusion of all such hopes of his deluded creditors, for Mr. Sheridan was consistent in one thing to the last — entire lack of financial responsibility.

The other exception was Sir Percival, who was so gay, so generous, so witty that Brooking, blinded by the glitter of a sparklingly brilliant personality, neither saw nor felt the hideous moral imperfections that this winning gentleman hid beneath his splendid exterior. The several peccadilloes really beyond all extenuation or apology of which the baronet had been guilty had never been brought to the attention of his younger friend and so at the time of which this tale is a chronicle it would have been difficult to find two closer cronies than this pair of young noblemen, who were strolling leisurely in the direction of the schoolhouse.

Sir Percival looked at Brooking quizzically.

"You do not approve, lad," he said with a little laugh. "You 're too good a fellow, I am afraid."

"I wish I could be as timid about you," replied Brooking, pleasantly.

"Can't you, dear boy? No? Pray, why not?"

"Do you really wish to know?" asked Brooking, hesitating a little.

Sir Percival treated himself daintily to a pinch of snuff and brushed the dust from his coat with an embroidered handkerchief.

"I think you wish to tell me," he answered, smiling. "It amounts to the same thing between friends, does n't it?"

"I think we may as well understand each other now," said Brooking, in a serious tone.

"I quite agree with you," remarked Sir Percival,

inwardly wondering what this introduction would lead to.

"I have been postponing this conversation from day to day for the last week."

"Indeed? And why?"

"It is rather a delicate subject."

"I would prefer one that is indelicate, if it is not inconvenient," suggested Sir Percival.

"For once in your life, Lovelace, be serious."

"Even *that* I will not deny you. Proceed."

"We have been pals since boyhood. As little lads we blacked each other's eyes."

"We did," admitted Sir Percival, laughing gently, "and bled each other's noses, too."

"We licked the same stick of candy."

"Gad, yes. My favorite was peppermint. I remember it as well as though it were but yesterday."

"We grew up to manhood together," continued Brooking, half sadly. "A pretty couple of rakes we were, too."

"We *are* still, dear lad," corrected Sir Percival. "Two very pretty little libertines, upon my honor."

"In London, where we were well known as an unworthy couple, I have no fault to find with you."

"No?" said the baronet in surprise. "To tell the truth, that statement causes me some little astonishment."

"We sailed under our true colors there —"

"But," interrupted Sir Percival, "the same flag is still flying, old man."

"Ah," said his lordship, "while that is true, it must be remembered that they do not understand its meaning down here. I have n't much to brag of in

the way of morals, more is the pity, but no woman has ever wept of shame from my wrong doing, nor will a woman ever do so."

Sir Percival gave his companion a smile of interrogation.

"And I?" he asked.

"I am not so sure about you," responded Lord Brooking, deliberately, "but in London, where you are known, the folly of a girl in trusting you would be so inexcusable that indiscretion upon your part might be readily condoned; but here in this peaceful, simple old town it is very different."

"Come to the point, Brooking. You are almost tiresomely wordy to-day."

"It amounts to this, Percy. I have done some things I'm heartily ashamed of and I intend in the future to be a better fellow."

"Very commendable, indeed," observed the baronet, a trifle bored. "Does my approval encourage you?"

"What do you intend to do with Bessie Dyke?" demanded the younger man, halting as he spoke.

Sir Percival paused and pensively cut down a weed or two with his walking stick.

"Hum," he said slowly. "As I thought."

"Do you mean honestly by the girl?"

"Your last words are quite correct," said the baronet, coolly. "Buy the girl — I mean to do that, Brooking."

"You frankly avow that is your object?" began Brooking, genuinely shocked.

"Tut — tut!" interrupted his companion, good humoredly. "She is a pretty creature, is n't she? Clever, too, in her own innocent, foolish, little way.

For her smiles and bread-and-buttery love — a welcome change, by the way, from the London brand of petulant passion — I 'll give her a carriage, horses, fine dresses, a necklace or two, and lastly my own charming self for — er — for probably as long a time as several months."

"And *then,* what will become of her?"

"Really, I don't know," answered Sir Percival. "Can't imagine, and I shan't bore myself by wondering. Perhaps she will marry some clodhopper like this Tom Moore. No doubt he would think her doubly valuable when I have finished with her."

"You are not in earnest," stammered Brooking, incredulously.

"Quite in earnest, my dear old chap. Ah, you think that I will not succeed? Pshaw, Brooking! Not here, perhaps, in this deliciously moral atmosphere, but elsewhere, yes. And I intend that she shall be elsewhere. Brooking, I shall fetch this rural beauty to London."

"She will not go," asserted his lordship.

"No?" returned the baronet. "Who, think you, will prevent her?"

"Tom Moore, or I am much mistaken," answered Brooking, confidently.

"Tut!" said Sir Percival, incredulously. "You do not give my tact sufficient consideration. I 'll wager the objections Mr. Moore may see fit to make will prove of no avail in influencing the lady. In fact, if I do say it myself, my plans are clever enough to discount the efforts of a dozen bogtrotters, let alone one and he a rhymester. To begin with I have read and gone in raptures over old Robin Dyke's verses. Egad, I have pronounced them beautiful, and really

they are not half bad, Brooking. If they were not so crammed with anarchy they would sell in London. The old boy is a socialist, you know. Yes, i' faith, he bastes the Prince and Castlereagh soundly," and this ardent royalist chuckled gleefully at the memory.

"Then you have broached the subject to Mr. Dyke?" asked Lord Brooking, as they continued their stroll in the direction of the schoolhouse. Sir Percival nodded his head.

"Yes, Brooking, the old scribbler is half persuaded already. I have promised him my support and patronage in London if he comes."

"And the girl?"

"I am tempting Bessie with the promise of a place at Old Drury, where, as you know, I am not without influence. Stab me! with her eyes and rosy red cheeks she would need neither paint nor powder to make her an ornament to the boards. Like most clever women, she has ambitions of a histrionic nature. She will come to London, Brooking, and once there! — once there — she is mine, dear lad, she is mine."

Brooking's anger and disgust refused to be longer pent up beneath his calm, almost indifferent, demeanor.

"What a low scoundrel you are!" he ejaculated, much to Sir Percival's surprise. The baronet for a moment regarded him quizzically, as though suspicious that this uncomplimentary description of his character was intended as a humorous remark, but seeing severity in his lordship's face, he smiled pleasantly and refused to take offence.

"Don't be so serious, old cock," he drawled. "Earnestness is so tiresome. Ah, life at its best bores me. My friends bore me. *Even you,* Brooking, bore

me at times. Toss me, if I know anything that does not bore me sooner or later."

"Sir Percival," said the younger gentleman, "if I whispered one half that you have said to me in Tom Moore's ear he would choke the life out of you and sink your body in the pond."

"And spoil the drinking water? Well, such treatment as you describe would not bore me at all events. 'T would be exciting, even unpleasant, 't is true, but interesting in the extreme, and anything which is not tedious is worthy of all consideration."

Brooking laughed, amused in spite of his disapproval.

"You are incorrigible," he said.

"Permit me to explain my view of the matter," continued Sir Percival, amiably.

"By all means, Percy."

"This piquant country damsel pleases me rarely. She is a sweet little thing whose view of life is about as comprehensive as that of a day-old kitten. She shall be educated, Brooking, and I will serve as tutor. You saw me stoop and pluck a primrose from beside the road as we walked this way, did you not? Here it is in my button-hole. This girl is a primrose, Brooking; I 'll wear her till she is faded, — then, like this wilted blossom, I will toss her aside. And why? Because there are other primroses as fair and sweet, unplucked and unfaded, that grow beside my path farther on, and I like fresh flowers and new faces."

This very pretty gentleman helped himself to snuff, and then beamed benevolently upon his companion. Brooking saw the baronet was in sober earnest in spite of his pleasant manner and humorous tone. A new comprehension of his friend's real character dawned

upon his mind, and for the first time in the long years of their acquaintance and fellowship he was able to strip from the libertine the exterior of the winning and courtly gentleman that had hitherto served to conceal his imperfections. In that one moment vanished the affection and admiration the younger man had felt for the elder, leaving only the colder and less exacting friendship existing between men of the same circle in society, who find much to interest and amuse in each other's company, but nothing to love or respect.

There was a slight pause before his lordship spoke, but when he did so there was a new ring to his voice.

"If you harm this little girl, I 'll never take your hand in mine again. You hear, Percy? Do as you have said, and we are strangers forever."

"And why?" demanded his companion.

"Because I 'll not own friendship with so filthy a rogue as you will have proved yourself to be."

"Hum!" murmured Sir Percival, thoughtfully. "Then you will probably constitute yourself her protector?"

"If necessary, yes."

"And will no doubt seek to balk me by telling her what a villain you think me, lad?"

"You know better than that," replied Brooking, a reproachful tone perceptible in his voice.

"So I do," assented the baronet. "What do you say to making it a game? One hundred guineas I win."

The instinct of the gamester, without which no buck of the times was considered completely a gentleman in society's interpretation of the word, stirred in the blood of his lordship.

"Done," said he.

"Good lad," commented Sir Percival. "My cards are wealth and fame, London and Drury Lane."

"Mine are the girl's honesty and Tom Moore."

"Tom Moore?" repeated the other, inquiringly.

"Yes," answered Brooking, "for if Bessie Dyke does go to London with you as her patron, I 'll bring Tom Moore there and be *his*."

"Just as you like," said Sir Percival.

Reaching the door of the schoolhouse a moment later, the two bloods knocked vigorously and stood on the stone threshold, waiting patiently for a response from the interior. As this was not forthcoming, after another moment's delay, Sir Percival opened the door and led the way into the schoolroom.

Chapter Seven

TOM MOORE OBLIGES A FRIEND AND GETS IN TROUBLE

"CAN it be Mistress Bessie has departed for the day?" said Sir Percival, surveying the deserted room with no little disappointment.

"I think not," replied his lordship, imitating his companion's look of investigation. "As I thought, Sir Percival! There is her hat."

As he spoke, Brooking pointed to a dainty affair composed of some complicated combination of white straw and blue ribbons, from which peered inquisitively forth a bunch of pink posies. This charming creation hung pendant by the strings from a nail in the wall behind the desk, making plain that the schoolmistress intended to return.

"True, Brooking," said Sir Percival, and taking it down he pressed one of the ribbons to his lips. "Almost as sweet and pretty as its owner. Egad, how tuned in harmony with her own charm are the belongings of a dainty and tasteful woman. Like the scientists of the Museum who from a bone construct a skeleton, so could I from this little hat draw the portrait of the lady whom it might become."

"You are dangerously near sentimentality," said Brooking, as though warning the baronet of peril unperceived.

Sir Percival laughed.

"I sometimes forget that I am no longer a lad of two-and-twenty, though Heaven knows I lack not reminders. Impossible as it seems, it is nevertheless true that I found a gray hair this morning. A silver messenger from approaching Age. I plucked the rascally thing out and breathed more freely when I was rid of it."

A knock sounded on the door by which the pair had entered, and Sir Percival, peeking slyly through a convenient window, gave an exclamation of dismay.

"Pluck me, Brooking, if it is not old Robin Dyke himself. Devil take the old bore!"

Brooking pointed to the other exit.

"Perhaps we can escape this way."

Sir Percival, followed by his lordship, tiptoed across the room, but before they reached the other doorway, Mr. Dyke, weary of waiting, entered briskly, and their plan of evasion was abandoned as hastily as it had been adopted.

"Why, if it is not Mr. Dyke," cried Sir Percival, cheerily, quite as though he were overjoyed at the meeting. "Good-day to you, sir. I hope it finds you sound in health."

Dyke flushed with pleasure at the heartiness of the great gentleman's greeting. He was a pleasant-faced old man, simple and good-hearted, too prone to trust in the honor of others, but erring only by giving them credit for benevolence and honesty equal to his own. He was quite a portly old person, with a face strongly lined in spite of its placid expression. His hair, worn rather long as became a poet, was a wavy, shimmery gray, and he walked with a rambling sort of gait that

suggested vaguely a compromise between a stride and a toddle. Sir Percival's quick eye caught sight of a suggestive roll of manuscript sticking out of the newcomer's pocket.

"Ah!" exclaimed the baronet, tapping the paper with his cane. "I see a paper peeking from your coat, Mr. Dyke. Another poem, I'll be bound. Come now, sir, out with it. I swear, we *will* hear it, eh, Brooking?"

"I'm *afraid* we will," murmured his lordship beneath his breath, but he bowed in pleasant assent in reply to the old gentleman's inquiring look.

"What?" continued Sir Percival. "Too modest, eh? Then I will read it myself," and, with a gesture gracefully apologetic for the liberty, he drew the roll from Dyke's pocket.

"Really, Sir Percival," stammered the old man, in pleased embarrassment. "My poor effort—"

"Your *poor* effort," repeated Sir Percival, scanning the first page through his eyeglass, as he spoke. "If this be his poor effort, Brooking, what would his best be?"

"God knows!" murmured Brooking to himself, "I hate to think of it."

Sir Percival's quick ear caught his lordship's muttered remark, so, as the flustered poet crossed to the window in hope of obtaining a glimpse of the absent schoolmistress, the baronet turned to Brooking with a laugh.

"Perhaps God knows," he whispered, "or perhaps it is better known in the *other* place. Look at it, Brooking."

"Must I?" replied the younger man, reluctantly.

"Of course you must," asserted Sir Percival. Then more loudly he continued:

"Genius in every line, and more between them. My dear Dyke, we must have you in England."

"You think so, Sir Percival?" said the old gentleman, greatly flattered.

"I am sure of it," answered the other as though convinced, returning the poem to its author. "But once you are there, no seditious political versifying like this. Why, sir, the Prince would foam at the mouth if he saw this. Love lyrics, sir, for the ladies. That must be your game, dear man."

Mr. Dyke hardly knew which to regard as the greater compliment, the implication that he had but to exert himself to write poetry that would be pleasing to the fair sex of London, or the assertion that the satire of his latest production was sufficient to cause annoyance even to Royalty itself. Still not quite decided in regard to the matter, he blew his nose resoundingly and modestly replied:

"I would restrain my opinions, since I cannot change them."

Sir Percival winked wickedly at Brooking to draw the latter's attention to his next remark.

"Have you thought over my proposal, Mr. Dyke?"

"I have given it much deliberation," answered that worthy, in a tone that but ill concealed the delight occasioned him by the mere suggestion of such an idea.

"Well, Mr. Dyke?"

"I feel most favorably inclined, I must confess," replied the old gentleman.

"Ah!" said Sir Percival, in an undertone to Lord Brooking, "d'ye hear that, lad? He must confess."

"I wish you had to, Percy. It would save me trouble."

"Then it is decided?" said Sir Percival, looking triumphantly at his friend.

Dyke hesitated.

"No," he said, "not exactly decided. It now rests with my daughter. If she agrees with me, I will be pleased to do as you have suggested."

"Then Bessie shall say 'Yes,'" responded the baronet.

Chancing to look out the window at this moment, Sir Percival caught a glimpse of a familiar figure passing on a path running near the schoolhouse.

"What, what?" he laughed. "There goes young Farrell. Who is the petticoat in tow?"

"That is his sister Winnie," replied Mr. Dyke, peering through his glasses. "A nice girl, Sir Percival, with a proper admiration for literature."

"Too dumpy, by far," responded that gentleman, surveying the lady with anything but approval. "By the way, I 've something to say to Terence. Brooking, while I run after them, you may tell Mr. Dyke your opinion of his poetry."

And hastening to the door, the baronet gave chase to the couple, already at quite a distance.

At this moment Farrell chanced to look around and, beholding the approaching macaroni, halted his companion and stood waiting, his sister feeling quite giddy with the thought of meeting so great a beau as Sir Percival.

"I 've a word or two to say that may interest you, Terence, if you can spare me a moment," began the baronet.

"My time is quite at your disposal, Sir Percival," replied Farrell. "Permit me to present you to my sister."

Sir Percival bowed with graceful formality.

"La, Mistress Farrell," he sighed, prettily, "your father is indeed fortunate. With such a son and such a daughter his old age should be crowned with happiness and content."

"Father finds much to criticise," said the girl. "I fear he takes no such flattering view of his children as you insinuate he should."

"Criticise?" repeated Sir Percival in a tone of astonishment. "What can he wish for?"

"Much, if one may judge from his complaints," answered Winnie, not a little puffed up by the baronet's condescension and approval. "I 'll not keep you from your business with my prattle, sir. Terence, I will go on to Mrs. McCloud's and stop for you at the schoolhouse on my way back."

"You are most amiable, Mistress Farrell," said Sir Percival, gratefully.

The girl courtesied in what she hoped was a good imitation of the London manner, and continued on her way, leaving the two gentlemen to stroll toward the schoolhouse.

"Well, Sir Percival," said Farrell knowingly, "what is afoot?"

As he spoke he gave the baronet a searching look, which drew forth a pleasant smile by way of answer.

"You never lose time in getting to the point."

"Except when it's a sword," replied Farrell. "Then I can be devilish slow."

Sir Percival's face wore a pensive look as he regarded his friend.

"For a country squire you present a wonderfully fashionable appearance," he remarked, his eye travelling approvingly from the bell-crowned beaver on the youth's well-shaped head to the carefully tied stock and thence to the immaculately polished boots which ornamented feet both small and neatly turned. "Your costume would not be out of place on Pall Mall, Terence."

With characteristic cunning the courtier had detected young Farrell's weak point. The youthful Irishman's fondest wish was that he might some day be acknowledged as a beau in no less a place than London itself; a city which dictated fashion to the rest of the kingdom, drawing its own inspiration from the finicky fancy of George Brummell, now at the height of his power as dictator of society.

Farrell flushed with pleasure at Sir Percival's commendation.

"I' faith," he answered, "even in Ireland we are not entirely lacking in taste."

"No, not entirely," observed the baronet. "And the cards, Terence? Does Fortune smile upon you these days?"

"Not so frequently as my pocket demands, sir. To tell the truth, I 've played in most villainous luck this last week."

"Then possibly you would regard the opportunity to earn one hundred pounds with favoring eye?"

"Would I? Try me, Sir Percival," answered Farrell eagerly.

"Very well, Terence," replied the baronet, "but

whether you accept or refuse my proposition you bind yourself as an honorable man to repeat to no one what I shall suggest?"

"Of course," answered Farrell. "You may confide in me, Sir Percival."

"I have work for that infernally clever brain of yours. One hundred pounds if you will devise a scheme that parts Bessie Dyke from this Tom Moore who annoys me."

It cannot be said that Farrell was astonished at the words of Sir Percival. Nevertheless, that such a great and clever man should consider it advisable to obtain assistance in outwitting so comparatively rustic an individual as Tom Moore, was, in the youth's eyes, rather a damaging admission of weakness. At least so he regarded it, for the moment not realizing that to a gentleman of large fortune it was far more satisfactory to busy another's brain than to greatly exert his own, even though the result of the latter might be more pleasing in the end.

"One hundred pounds," repeated Sir Percival, languidly.

"But Tom Moore is my friend."

"Ah!" said the baronet, "in that case one hundred and *one* pounds."

Farrell laughed a little.

"Very well, Sir Percival," said he, "I will undertake to earn the sum you mention. I must admit the airs and graces with which Moore sees fit to conduct himself are extremely offensive to me. His manner is one of extreme condescension, and more than once I have felt myself to be upon the verge of resenting it."

"Then," said the baronet, "it is agreed?"

Farrell nodded pleasantly.

"How will you do it?"

"Easily, Sir Percival. You leave the affair to me and I 'll fix it so Bessie Dyke will never look at Tom Moore again."

"If you succeed, I 'll make it one hundred and fifty."

"Ah," said Farrell, lifting the latch of the schoolhouse door, "I like dealing with you, Sir Percival."

At almost the same moment Bessie Dyke entered at the opposite side. Sir Percival bowed in his most courtly manner.

"Here is the missing damsel at last," he said.

Moore pushed the half-closed door open and stepped in, bucket in hand.

"There is more to follow," he announced, setting his burden in an out-of-the-way corner as he spoke.

"More?" echoed Sir Percival, questioningly.

"Yes, Tom Moore."

"A villainous pun, upon my honor."

"A pun upon *your* honor might well be such," said Moore, coming forward.

Sir Percival allowed an expression of surprise to pass over his handsome face.

"Egad," he said, gently, as though in veiled wonderment. "Wit, and from such a source."

"A sauce of wit makes game more savory," returned Moore, not at all irritated at the baronet's accent of superiority. "And I know your game," he added in an undertone.

"Indeed?"

"In deed and in thought, too," answered Moore, cheerfully. "You will not succeed, my good sir."

"Will you prevent me, Mr. Moore?"

"I fancy so, Sir Percival."

The baronet raised his voice, so that the conversation, hitherto inaudible to the others, who were clustered at the side of the room, could be easily heard. He did this intending to overwhelm this youth, whom he despised both as a rustic and as an Irishman, with the apt and stinging wit that had made him famous even in London drawing-rooms accustomed to the sparkling sallies and epigrams of Sheridan and Rogers. He regarded the conversational defeat of Moore as an easy task, and proceeded to attempt it with a confidence born of many hard-fought victories won in the brilliantly flippant circle surrounding the Prince of Wales, a society that could only be described as pyrotechnically witty.

"I understand that you write poetry, Mr. Moore."

"But you would not understand the poetry I write."

"But I might buy some of it. I am not over particular as to merit, you see."

"I am very particular, you see, to whom I sell."

"Why?" demanded Sir Percival, taking snuff with a graceful flourish.

"Because I write for the masses and classes, not for the asses," replied Moore, as pleasantly as though paying a delicate compliment to the nobleman.

Sir Percival recognized that the first point had been scored by his hitherto despised rival, and rallied gamely, as became a gentleman of blood and breeding.

"That last accounts for your unpopularity with your fellow-countrymen," he suggested.

"Oh, they are not the asses I alluded to, Sir Percival."

"Perhaps you intended that for me, then?"

"Does a fellow feeling make you wondrous kind?" asked Moore, innocently.

"Hum. Rather clever, Moore," said Sir Percival, planning a particularly nasty retort, which he was prevented from delivering by Bessie's approach.

"How is my little schoolmistress to-day?" he said, winningly, to the girl.

Moore, loath to relinquish his victory, decided to continue the battle of wits, and thus brought about his undoing in the moment of his triumph.

"*Your* little schoolmistress?" he repeated. "Have you become a scholar, Sir Percival?"

"To be taught by Mistress Dyke, I would become anything."

"Except honest," suggested Moore.

"Sir!" exclaimed his rival, angrily.

"Why, sir, if you are honest already, there is surely no need of change."

"He had you there, Percy," said Lord Brooking, joining the group.

"On the contrary, Brooking, Mistress Dyke has me *here*," replied Sir Percival, his anger cooled.

"We all have our troubles," observed Moore, plaintively, "even Mistress Dyke."

This was the baronet's opportunity, and he made good use of it.

"Egad," he drawled, "have you been reading your own poetry, Mr. Moore?"

Bessie laughed merrily as Moore tasted the bitterness of defeat and allowed himself to be led away to the organ by Lord Brooking.

"A song, Mr. Moore. I've heard such reports of your singing that I am more than eager to listen to

one of your ballads. Mr. Dyke and our friend Farrell join me in the request."

"But, my lord," objected Moore, casting an inquiring glance towards where Sir Percival was talking glibly to the little schoolmistress, "I — er — really I 'm not in voice to-day."

"Nonsense!" said his lordship. "We will not be denied, Mr. Moore."

"Then since I 'm not Saint Peter, I 'll have to yield. What shall it be?"

A short discussion followed at the organ, and when this had been settled by Dyke and Farrell choosing "The Shamrock," Moore, calmly paying no attention to such a detail as that, proceeded to sing his latest poem, written only that morning in honor of Sir Percival.

Nothing could have been more to the point, for at this very moment the baronet was urging the girl to ratify her parent's decision in regard to the proposed move to London, painting for her in vivid words what a successful career at Drury Lane Theatre would mean, at the same time dwelling upon her father's opportunity for advancement as poet and scholar.

"Oh! weep for the hour,
When to Eveleen's bower
The Lord of the Valley with false vows came;
The moon hid her light
From the heavens that night,
And wept behind her clouds o'er the maiden's shame.

"The clouds passed soon
From the chaste cold moon,
And heaven smiled again with her vestal flame;
But none will see the day
When the clouds shall pass away,
Which that dark hour left upon Eveleen's fame.

"The white snow lay
On the narrow pathway
When the Lord of the Valley crost over the moor;
And many a deep print
On the white snow's tint
Showed the track of his footsteps to Eveleen's door.

"The next sun's ray
Soon melted away
Every trace on the path where the false Lord came;
But there 's a light above
Which alone can remove
That stain upon the snow of fair Eveleen's fame."

Moore's voice died away melodiously in the last plaintive note.

"A very pretty song, Mr. Moore. It tells a beautiful story and points a splendid moral," said Lord Brooking.

"Yes, my lord," answered Moore, glancing toward Bessie. "It shows the folly of a poor girl in believing aught told her by a nobleman. It is as true nowadays as it was then."

"Oh, Tom," said the girl, tremulously. "It is beautiful. Is it not, Sir Percival?"

"Oh, very, very," replied the baronet. "Extremely so. I congratulate you, Mr. Moore."

"Have you reason to do so, Sir Percival?" asked Moore.

His question was answered immediately, for Bessie turned toward the gentleman addressed.

"I thank you, Sir Percival," she said, "but I fear London is not for such as father and me."

As Moore gave a sigh of relief and turned away, satisfied that he had foiled the baronet in his attempt to entice Bessie from Ireland, Farrell touched him on the arm and led him to one side.

"Will you meet me here, Tom, in half an hour?" he asked.

"Is it important, Terry?" demanded Moore, who intended to devote the rest of the afternoon to courting Bessie.

"It may mean money enough to start you in London."

"The devil!" exclaimed the poet. "I 'll meet you then, for to London I am bound to go, sooner or later."

At this moment Lord Brooking, who had been chatting in a corner with Mr. Dyke, came forward, followed by the old gentleman.

"Sir Percival," said his lordship, a malicious twinkle in his eye, "Mr. Dyke has invited us to try a little wine of his own manufacture. You will be charmed, I know."

"A rare variety of grape, Sir Percival," said Mr. Dyke, delightedly. "In fact, I venture to assert that you have never tasted such a vintage."

"Very likely not, Mr. Dyke," replied Sir Percival, quite convinced that such was the case, and not at all sure that he might not regard himself as favored by fortune on that account.

"You will honor me?" asked Mr. Dyke, eagerly.

Sir Percival saw he could not refuse without wounding the pride of his would-be host, and therefore yielded politely.

"I shall be delighted, I am sure," he answered. Then, lowering his voice, he murmured in Brooking's ear:

"I owe you one, my lord."

Brooking laughed and took the baronet's arm.

"Come, then," said he, pointing to the door with his walking-stick.

"Perhaps Mr. Dyke will read us another poem," said Sir Percival, hopefully.

"Heaven forbid!" whispered his lordship.

"Could anything be more appropriate?" continued the baronet. "We drink the wine pressed from our friend's own grapes, while we listen to the poetry his muse has sipped from the fountain of the gods upon Parnassus."

"You should write poetry, Sir Percival," said Mr. Dyke, much flattered.

"I 'll leave that to Mr. Moore," answered the baronet, advancing towards Bessie.

"There are several other things I wish you would leave to me," said the poet.

"No doubt," replied Sir Percival. "My arm, Mistress Dyke?"

"I must decline that honor," said Bessie. "My duties require me to remain here for a while longer."

"I am sorry for that, Mistress Dyke. You will join us, Mr. Moore?"

"I never drink, Sir Percival," replied Moore, endeavoring to look virtuous without much success.

"Indeed?" said the baronet. "You had better begin, sir. Then perhaps you would write less poetry."

Moore failed to find a suitable retort, and therefore mounted the little platform on which stood the blackboard, as Mr. Dyke, Lord Brooking, and Farrell moved towards the door.

"Mistress Dyke," said Sir Percival, "if you can

spare a thought this afternoon, perhaps you will oblige me by reconsidering your decision in regard to London?"

"I have quite made up my mind, thank you," answered Bessie, dusting off her desk with her apron. "Simple country folk would be out of place in so great a city."

"Brains and beauty are made welcome everywhere," answered the baronet. "Moreover, it is a woman's privilege to change her mind."

"Will you be long, my daughter?" asked Mr. Dyke, turning at the door.

"Not very long, father," she answered, demurely. "The — the arithmetic is very difficult for to-morrow, and I must be prepared for the lesson."

Moore helped himself to a piece of chalk, and began figuring on the blackboard.

"What are you doing?" asked Sir Percival, eying the poet through his glass.

"I am preparing the arithmetic," replied Moore, marking a huge six upon the board. Then turning he counted those present. "Six," said he. "One — two — three — four."

As he spoke he checked off all but Bessie and himself upon his fingers.

"Four from six," he continued, doing the subtraction with the chalk, "leaves two, Bessie and me. Good afternoon, gentlemen."

Every one laughed but Sir Percival, who contented himself with a faint smile.

"Quite so," said he, "quite a joke. My time for laughing will come later."

"The later the better," said Moore. "He who

laughs last laughs best. Delay it as long as you can, and you will enjoy it the more."

"No doubt, Mr. Moore. Good afternoon to you, Mistress Dyke. Sir, I 'm your most obedient."

"Good-day, Sir Percival," said Bessie, dropping a courtesy as the baronet turned again at the door. Then, as his tall figure vanished from the threshold, she faced her lover with a little sigh of relief.

"Tom," she said reprovingly, "you must not speak as you do to Sir Percival. For a little while I feared you would have a real quarrel."

"Perhaps that would be the easiest way out of it, after all," said Moore, belligerently. "I 'd ask nothing better than to get a chance at him."

"I can't have you fighting with every stranger that comes to Ireland, Tom," said Bessie, assuming that slight air of proprietorship that is so soothing to an eager lover, implying as it does a regard not only of the present moment, but apparently keeping in sight possibilities of the future. Moore felt this subtle influence and yielded to it gradually.

"Thanks be to St. Patrick, they are gone at last," said he in a sulky tone. "Now you can do your arithmetic."

"Tom, you are cross," said Bessie, reproachfully. "This is what I get for staying here to please you."

"What was Sir Percival saying to you so confidentially just now?"

"He was coaxing me to go to London."

"I knew it," cried Moore, angrily. "I 'll do that gay lad an injury if he keeps on."

"Hush, Tom," said Bessie, reprovingly.

"I 'll do something desperate to him," continued Moore, striding up and down the room in his rage.

"Tom," said the girl, in her most persuasive tone. "*Tom!*"

"I 'll punish him terribly if he don't let you alone."

Bessie seized him by the arm and compelled him to halt.

"Tom dear," she asked, "what *will* you do?"

"I — I — I 'll dedicate a volume of my poems to him, if he don't look out," declared Moore, yielding to the girl's calming influence.

"But I am not going to London," laughed Bessie, "so you 'll let him off this time, won't you, Tom?"

"You promise you will not go, Bessie?" asked Moore, earnestly, taking her hands in his.

"I promise that while you are as true and kind as you have been to-day, I 'll not even think of it again," she answered, soberly.

"True?" repeated Moore, tenderly. "Why, every thought of mine has been faithful since first I met you. Kind? The devil himself could n't be anything but sweet to you, I 'm sure."

Bessie drew her hands away, satisfied that she had made sure of the public peace continuing unfractured so far as her lover was concerned.

"Now," she said, in pretty imitation of his previous cross speech, "*now* you can do your arithmetic."

"Can I?" answered Moore, laughing. "Then the first sum will be an addition. One added to two. One kiss to two lips."

"And the second?" asked Bessie, at a safe distance.

"Subtraction. Two kisses from two lips."

"That would leave nothing, Tom."

"Nothing but a taste of heaven," replied he, hopefully approaching her.

"A kiss is not right," objected Bessie, in her most moral accents.

"Then give me one that is left," urged Moore. "I see you have plenty, Bessie."

She shook her head.

"Time enough for that when you have been to London. You might see some girl there whom you would much prefer, and I'll not run the risk till I know that it is n't so," she answered wisely.

"Ah, Bessie, Bessie darling, why will you doubt me so? Oh, I love you, dearest, I love you."

"Sometimes," she answered in a softer tone, "sometimes I almost believe you mean what you say. Ah, Tom, *if* I could only be sure!"

An eager light came into Moore's fine eyes.

"What can I do to make you sure?" he whispered, his voice vibrant with love and tenderness.

"I will tell you, Tom. Wait till time has proved your heart beyond all doubting. We are both young, and the world is all before us. For you, dearest Tom, it holds fame and fortune —"

"Ah, Bessie," he interrupted, "do you think so?"

"There will come a day," she answered, proudly, "when in all Ireland there will be no name so boasted of, so loved and reverenced, as Thomas Moore."

"And yet if this be true, I 'd throw it all away gladly, if by so doing, I 'd be sure of you," Moore answered, sincerity written on his face. "Bessie my darlin', why won't you believe in me? Won't you love me, Bessie? Can't you love me, Bessie, dear?"

For a moment the girl hesitated. In her heart she

yielded, but before the words of surrender left her lips she rallied and remained outwardly true to her resolve. Had Moore taken her in his arms and kissed her, reading aright the soft glowing eyes bent on him with so loving a glance, she would have faltered in her determination, but he did not realize that the time had that second come, when she would have sacrificed to her love for him her preconceived and carefully cherished idea of what was right and best for them both, and so he failed to take advantage of the one opportunity to have his own way that capricious fortune granted him. Had he been wiser, his whole future life might have been changed. London might never have known the sweetest poet ever brought forth by Ireland and the afterwards First Nightingale of Fashion's drawing-room might have lived and died an obscure rhymer in some country town.

Like a knowing lass, Bessie, finding herself on the verge of a tear, sought safety in the relaxing influence of a laugh, and extending an ink-besmeared finger in reproach, demanded if Moore intended to make good his promise to remove the stain.

Moore chuckled and the tenseness of the situation was removed.

"Faith," said he, abandoning his attempt to persuade Bessie from her way of thinking, "I 'll wash your hands for you, for fear, if I don't, you 'll wash your hands of me."

Turning on his heel, Moore crossed to the corner where he had left his bucket of water, and, picking it up, placed it beside the basin that lay on the bench.

"Come here, Bessie, and I 'll scrub you clean as a whistle," he announced cheerfully.

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What a shame, Tom. I am so sorry."

"Oh—h!" exclaimed Moore, sitting down on the bench with his face in his handkerchief. "Help! Thieves!"

"Oh, Tom," said Bessie, full of regret, "does it hurt you dreadfully?"

"It does that."

"Oh, I am so sorry."

"Thank you kindly."

Kneeling down beside Moore, Bessie drew aside the handkerchief and kissed him soundly on the eye thus brought into view.

"Who did that?" demanded Moore, as though in doubt.

"I did," answered Bessie, boldly. "Is it better?"

"Yes," replied Moore, "but the other eye is full of soap. Cure that, too, like a darlin', Bessie."

"There," said the girl, decisively. "I don't believe it hurt you at all. You have made a fool of me."

Feeling himself detected, Moore abandoned his pretence of suffering.

"Well," he said, with a broad smile, "I am a kiss to the good at all events. Many thanks, Bessie."

"Tom, I am very angry with you."

"I don't believe it, Bessie. You ought to be complimented to see how hard I am willing to work for a kiss."

"I 'll not believe you again."

"That is nothing new, Bessie, darlin'. You are a most unbelieving young female at best."

"There is some one at the door, Tom," said Bessie, her quick ear hearing a foot on the doorstep.

"Come in," said Moore, in answer to Farrell's knock, and that young gentleman entered, carrying himself in so evident an imitation of Sir Percival Lovelace that the poet roared outright.

"What is the joke?" asked Farrell, not at all pleased at Moore's laughter.

"You are, Terry," replied the other. "Faith, it is too bad entirely that we have n't a glass so you could see. My, but you are a macaroni, Terence. Is Lovelace pleased with his pupil?"

And, drawing his handkerchief from his pocket in emulation of Farrell's manipulation of his, Moore proceeded to swagger up and down the schoolhouse in so accurate an imitation of Farrell's recently adopted manner of comporting himself that even Bessie laughed.

Farrell grew red with anger, but, deciding this was not the time to resent Moore's fun, apparently took the performance in good part.

"You are in fine spirits, Tom," he observed, laying his hat on a convenient stool.

"Never better," replied Moore, jovially. "Can I do anything for you, Terry, my boy?"

"Have you forgotten our engagement?"

"Faith, I had that, Terence."

Then, turning to Bessie, Moore continued:

"You see, alanna, how you drive everything but yourself out of my head?"

"That is as it may be," remarked Bessie, sagely, taking her hat from the nail in the wall supporting it. "I must be going. There is my arithmetic, Tom. You can carry it for me."

Moore took the book she held out to him.

"I 'll not be long," he said, as though in excuse. "I promised to have a bit of a confab with Terry. When that is over with, I 'll join you at your house."

Bessie nodded pleasantly and walked over to the door.

"Well," she said, looking out as she opened it, "I shan't lack for an escort. There is Sir Percival now."

"Wait a minute," said Moore, hastening towards her, but she bid him good-bye, laughingly, and shut the door behind her as she stepped out.

Moore, ill pleased, returned to Farrell.

"Did you hear that?" he demanded.

Farrell admitted that he had, and flicked an imaginary speck of dirt from his ruffle.

"You have her arithmetic to comfort you," he suggested.

"It 's little comfort I ever get out of such books," said Moore, laying the volume down on Bessie's desk. "Now tell me what ails you, Terence?"

"If I do," said Farrell, cautiously, "you 'll never repeat it to a soul?"

"Shall I cross my heart, lad?"

Farrell shook his head gravely.

"I 'll leave that for Mistress Dyke to attend to," he answered.

"Troth," said Moore, smiling, "she made it all criss-cross long ago. But go on, Terry. Unbosom yourself."

"It 's this, Tom. My sister Winnie is secretly engaged to Captain Arbuckle of the Ninth Dragoons."

"Engaged to an Englishman!" ejaculated Moore, as though horrified. "And secretly. That adds insult to injury."

"Aye, secretly," repeated Farrell, dolefully.

"*That 's* how you came to know, doubtless," re-

marked Moore. "Oh, it is awful, Terence, but cheer up, lad. *You* won't have to be Arbuckle's wife. Let that comfort you, Terry."

"That is not all, Tom. I am poorer than you are, and I have a debt of honor of fifty pounds due to-morrow."

"Whew!" ejaculated Moore, in astonishment. "Well, whose fault is that?"

"Yours, Tom," replied Farrell, boldly.

"Mine? How the devil can that be?" asked Moore, leaning against the desk for comfort and support.

"It is very simple. I thought you were sweet on Winnie."

"Me? Never!" cried Moore. "Not for a fraction of a minute. Not that Winnie is n't a dear girl, for none knows that she is such better than I, but we would never do for a couple."

"Unfortunately I thought otherwise," responded Farrell. "That is the trouble."

"You interest me very much," said the poet, helping himself to a seat on the desk. "Go on with your tale of woe."

"I was so sure of it," continued Farrell, "that I bet Lieutenant Cholmondely you would propose to her before the first of the month."

"A nice performance," commented Moore, swinging his feet. "Then what?"

"Arbuckle heard me, and, like a sneak, went off quietly and asked Winnie the next day."

"And was accepted? Serves him right, Terry."

"But the bet stands," persisted Farrell, sorrowfully. "And to-morrow is the first of the month. I have n't a penny to pay Cholmondely."

"It is too bad, Terry," replied Moore, sympathetically, "but you should never have made such a bet. It shows lack of respect for Winnie. At least some people would think so, though I am sure you never meant to convey any such impression."

"I thought you might help me," said Farrell, disconsolately. "Can't you, Tom?"

"I have n't quarter the money, Terry."

"But you are wanting to go to London, are n't you? Remember you are n't supposed to know Winnie is promised."

"True."

"Then, why can't you ask her and be refused? Cholmondely would pay me the money, and there would be fifty pounds to divide between us, for I 'll give you half if you help me out of the scrape."

Moore frowned.

"That would n't be honest, Terry," he said severely.

"Was it fair for Arbuckle to propose before the first, knowing, as he did, that I had till then to win?" demanded Farrell, in an injured tone.

"No," said Moore, "it was n't, though, of course, if he had waited a thousand years, I would n't have proposed in sober earnest."

"But you 'll do it in fun?"

"She is already engaged?"

"She is crazy over the captain," said Farrell, enthusiastically.

"Then she would be sure to refuse me."

"She would, and, Tom, you 'll have saved my honor," said Farrell, pleadingly.

"It is a shame for Cholmondely to get your money and Arbuckle your sister. I 'll do it to oblige you,

Terry," said Moore, "but I want none of your winnings. What I do is to help you out of a bad scrape, for friendship's sake, my lad."

"How can I thank you, Tom?" said Farrell, inwardly exultant, but to all appearance almost overcome at his friend's willingness to come to the rescue.

"By being more careful in the future about your betting," said Moore, kindly. As he spoke he drew nearer the window and caught a glimpse of Mistress Farrell approaching.

"By the powers, here comes Winnie now," he exclaimed.

"True for you, Tom, and headed this way."

"Now you get out of here, Terry, and we will have my rejection over with at once. I 'll be through in a jiffy."

"Don't be too precipitate or she will suspect something," advised Farrell.

"Leave it to me," said Moore. "You stand just outside the door there and you can listen to it all. Oh, it will be fine, Terry."

"Say, 'Will you have me?' Tom," said Terence, going to the door opposite to the one which his sister was now approaching.

"Don't try to teach me," said Moore. "It 's myself that 's to do this proposing, and I need no instruction. All you have to do is to listen. Don't go away now."

"Not I," said Terence. "I won't be easy till it 's over," and, laughing under his breath, he shut the door.

Truly fortune favored him this day, for coming up the hill was Bessie, not more than a moment or

two behind Winnie Farrell, who by this time had entered the school.

"Good-day, to you, Winnie," said Moore, politely. "Sure, it is blooming you are this afternoon. Like a whole bouquet of blossoms, let alone a single flower."

Winnie looked pleased at the compliment and smiled upon its bestower.

"How gallant you are to-day," she said in a flattered tone.

"Oh, I *said* it this day, but I *think* it all the week," replied Moore, placing a stool for the lady.

"Where is Terence?" she asked, seating herself. "He promised to wait for me here."

"I expect him back in a little while," replied Moore, casting a furtive glance in the direction of the door behind which he believed his friend to be concealed. "You can wait for him, Winnie. I have n't seen much of you lately."

"You know the road that leads to Farrell's, Tom," said the girl with a laugh. She was a plump little morsel with a soft voice, and a saucy tip-tilted nose; a pleasant, generous-hearted little soul, decidedly good to look upon.

"I have not forgotten the road," said Moore, meaningly.

"Then, why don't you come to see me?"

"For fear that I would n't be as welcome as Captain Arbuckle," said Moore, trying to look knowing.

Winnie looked surprised.

"Captain Arbuckle?" she said, wonderingly. "What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean, Winnie."

"No, I don't, Tom."

"You do, too, you artless creature," said Moore, laughing.

"What *are* you driving at, Tom?" asked Winnie, genuinely puzzled.

"At you, Winnie, dear," replied Moore, and then, conscious that his courage was rapidly leaving him, he proceeded desperately with his performance.

"Winnie Farrell, I love you."

"What?" cried the girl, rising from the stool.

"I love you, Winnie. Say you won't marry me," said Moore, relieved that he had finished. His satisfaction lasted only a moment for Winnie threw her arms around his neck with a little, joyous cry.

"Tom," she whispered, "I 'll be your wife gladly, for I 've loved you for weeks."

"What?" cried Moore. "Oh, Winnie, you are only joking? You don't mean it, Winnie? You don't, do you?"

Bessie gave a little sob. She had quietly opened the door in time to hear Moore's declaration, and, thunderstruck, had stood there, unperceived until now.

Winnie, abashed at Bessie's look of scorn and hatred, did not linger. The door closed behind her, and Moore, just beginning to realize his predicament, stood facing his angered sweetheart.

"Bessie," he said, chokingly. "Bessie, I can explain."

"I do not wish you to explain," she answered, her voice all a-tremble.

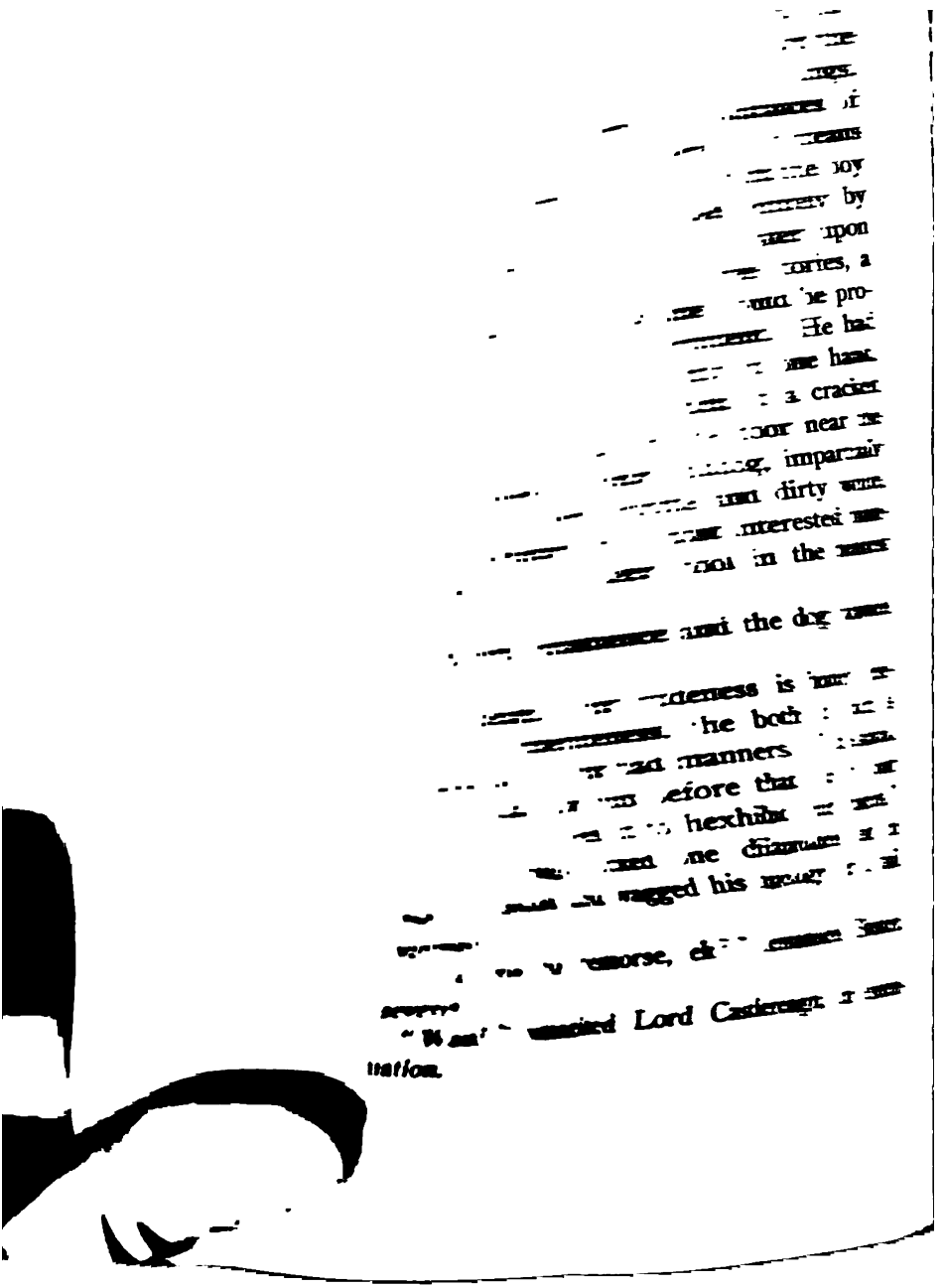
"Hear me, Bessie," he began, desperately, but she turned a deaf ear to his words.

"I 'll never believe you again, Tom Moore," she said, flinging from her bosom the rose he had given her. "I am done with you."

Then, turning, she closed the door in his face, and left him.

Book Two

"New hope may bloom,
And days may come
Of milder, calmer beam,
But there's nothing half so sweet in life
As Love's young dream:
No, there's nothing half so sweet in life
As Love's young dream."



"You 're a sinner, that 's wot you are," announced the boy, decisively, "and Hi 'as grave fear that you 'll never git to the dog-star when you are disceased."

The bulldog seemed depressed at this prediction, and, as though resolved to convince Buster of the injustice of his statement, leaped off the stool and approached him with various contortions supposed to be illustrative of regret and a desire to obtain restoration to a place in the youth's approval.

At this moment the old-clothesman paused beneath the window, and putting his hand trumpet-wise to his mouth, shrilly declared his ability and willingness to purchase whatever cast-off garments those dwelling in the vicinity might desire to sell. Buster promptly filled the paper bag with water from the pitcher, and, leaning out as far as he dared, dropped it with precise aim on the head of the old-clothesman. It landed fair and square upon the crown of the dilapidated beaver ornamenting his head, and burst with a soft squash, drenching his shoulders and scattering a spray all around him.

The dealer uttered a stream of oaths, and, mopping his face with a handkerchief of dubious hue, looked around for the author of this apparently unprovoked attack. As the missile had come from above, the fellow naturally looked upward in search of an enemy, but found nothing more suspicious in view than the head of a bulldog which was thrust from a window in dignified contemplation of the scene. Unfortunately the old-clothesman was well acquainted with the forbidding countenance of the dog, and promptly attributing his recent ducking to the usual companion of the animal, proceeded to vigorously announce his

Chapter Eight

INTRODUCES MONTGOMERY JULIEN ETHELBERT SPINKS

IN the attic of an old house in Holywell Street, London, a frowsy-headed, freckled-faced youth was peering from the gabled window that fronted on the busy thoroughfare below. This lad was conspicuous for his lack of beauty. He had a round jolly face, a turned-up and rather negatively developed nose, and eyes of a neutral shade that might be described as gray or green with equal correctness. His mouth was capable of stretching to a length almost awe-inspiring when first beheld, but could be forgiven for this extravagance, because the teeth thus exposed were white and regular. His chin was square and slightly protruding, imparting a rather pugnacious expression to a face that in other respects seemed to indicate that its owner was of a decidedly good-humored disposition. He was stockily built, so thick-set, in fact, that a quick glance would incline one to the belief that he was rather plump than otherwise, but a closer examination would have revealed that he owed his size to the possession of an unusual amount of bone and muscle. This young gentleman rejoiced in the sobriquet of Buster, though his real title was much more elegant, while lacking entirely in the almost epigrammatic terseness of his nickname. At the present time he

firm grip on the rattan and entered the hall, the door of which stood invitingly open. The rabble assembled in front of the house gave a cheer and waited eagerly for developments. Meanwhile Buster continued to survey the crowd below with a critical glance, quite oblivious to the danger brought near by the approach of the peddler. A minute passed and then another, but the boy was still looking out the window, so it was evident that Bekowsky had not yet reached the garret. The crowd began to get uneasy.

"W'ere the 'ell is the bloomin' ragbag gone ter?" asked one seedy individual. "Don't 'e know 'ee 's keeping us gents waiting?"

"Don't get himpatient, friends," advised Buster. "Bekowsky 's lost 'is wind and the 'all is so dark he can't see fer to find hit. Hi 'll send 'im a bit o' candle in a minute to 'elp 'im."

"He has fell and busted his neck, maybe," suggested a butcher's apprentice, in a tone that seemed to indicate he would not regard such a happening entirely in the light of a calamity.

"Perhaps 'is 'art 'as been touched hand 'ee can't bear to lay 'is 'and in hanger on a poor horphing like me," said Buster, almost tearful at the thought of such tenderness. "Perhaps 'ee 'as a noble nature hin spite o' that 'orrible phisomy."

"What d' ye's mane by congregating in front of me door like this?" cried a harsh voice, flavored by a rich Milesian accent.

"Hit 's Mrs. Malone," exclaimed Buster. "Hi'me that glad to lay heyes hon 'er. Come pertect me, Mrs. Malone."

A burly Irishwoman, dressed in her best bib and

tucker, as becomes a lady out making a few neighborly calls, elbowed her way through the crowd, sternly exhorting them to disperse.

"Oh, it's you, you satan?" she remarked wrathfully, gazing up at the freckled countenance of the lad. "Wot shenanigans have you been up to now?"

"Hi can't discuss my bizness hin front of a vulgar mob," responded Buster, loftily. "Hif you'll come hup, Mrs. Malone, Hi'll be pleased to hinform you. Hotherwise Hi'll be forced to maintain an 'aughty silence."

"Oh, I'll come up alright," declared Mrs. Malone, bent on getting to the bottom of the trouble at once.

"Hi 'opes so," replied Buster, doubtfully. "Shall Hi come to meet you?"

"Never mind."

"Hi don't mind, Mrs. Malone."

Mrs. Malone vanished in the hall and proceeded upstairs at so rapid a gait that she failed to perceive on the dimly lighted stairway the figure of Bekowsky, who had been brought to a standstill by the sudden appearance of Lord Castlereagh in fighting array at the head of the stairs. The dog so strongly resented any movement, whether up or down, on the part of the old-clothesman, that that individual had remained stationary, not daring to stir a foot in either direction until Mrs. Malone collided with him, forcing him to advance upward on his hands and knees several steps, a performance that brought Lord Castlereagh leaping down upon him.

Bekowsky gave one yell of terror and flew down the stairs in three bounds, the dog yelping furiously at his heels, while Mrs. Malone escaped a bad fall only by

hanging on to the banisters, against which she had backed herself in an effort to regain the breath rudely expelled from her lungs by the collision.

"Buster, you omadhaun, what devil's work is this?" gasped Mrs. Malone, as Lord Castlereagh disappeared below.

Receiving no answer, the good woman prudently decided to abandon her visit to the garret until the bull-dog should have returned to his domicile, leaving the stairs free from peril, and therefore turned her steps to her own headquarters on the floor beneath.

Chapter Nine

TOM MOORE RECEIVES CALLS FROM MRS. MALONE AND MR. DYKE

MEANWHILE Lord Castlereagh, having failed to overtake the terror-stricken old-clothesman before the lower door was reached, discreetly abandoned the pursuit, as experience had taught him it was not best for a bulldog to engage in public altercations when not accompanied by his master. So he came trotting upstairs, beaming with doggish good nature, the result of a gratifying realization of duty well done. As the door to the room from the window of which Buster was still surveying the rapidly diminishing throng clustered in front of the house was closed, the bulldog scratched vigorously with his claws for admittance, his request being speedily gratified, for, in spite of the old-clothesman's voluble explanations, the crowd refused to regard him as anything but a defeated contestant and, turning a deaf ear to his indignation, quietly dispersed to their various affairs, leaving Buster a complete victor in the recent battle.

"You done noble, Lord Castlereagh," said Buster, approvingly, at the same time seating himself upon one of the rickety chairs with which the attic was furnished. The comfort of this seat was immediately increased by his tipping it back on its rear legs, balance

being maintained by the elevation of his feet to the top of the table near by. This was the lad's favorite position, but his enjoyment was speedily eclipsed by disaster, as the bulldog, for the moment quite carried away with exultation at his master's unqualified commendation made a violent effort to climb up in that worthy's lap, a manœuvre resulting in both going over backwards with a crash.

"You willain!" ejaculated the boy, in great disgust. "Wot do you think Hi am? A hacro-a-bat, or wot?"

Lord Castlereagh apologized violently with his stumpy tail and seemed quite overwhelmed with regret.

"Has you means well, Hi forgives you, sir," said the Buster, rubbing his elbow, "but don't never turn no more flipflops in partnership wid Montgomery Julien Hethelbert Spinks, Esquire, or you may hexpect your walking papers. Hunderstand?"

Then, as Buster regained his feet, he remembered his master was in the adjoining bedroom asleep.

"My heye," he muttered. "We must 'ave disturbed 'im, hand 'im so tired and discouraged, too."

He listened for a moment, then, reassured by the silence reigning in the next room, nodded his head in satisfaction.

"'Ee's still asleep," he remarked to the dog. "Dreaming no doubt. Hof wot, Hi wonders? Publishers? Not much, or 'ee'd be a cussin'. Hof that 'aughty dame hover at Drury Lane, who won't kiss and make hup? That's hit, I'll bet. Well, this his n't polishin' 'is boots, his it, Pupsy?"

Seizing a brush from the table, the boy began to rub a dilapidated topboot vigorously, meanwhile humming in cheerful discord a verse of a song, as yet unknown

to the general public, but destined to become a permanent favorite with all lovers of music and poetry.

"'T was the last rose hof summer left bloomink alone."

A knock on the door interrupted his song, but before he could reply to it, in marched Mrs. Malone with arms akimbo, and a determined expression making grave a face naturally good humored.

"Oh, hit 's you, his it?" said Buster, regarding the woman with disapproving eye.

"I suppose you t'ought it was the Prince of Wales," replied Mrs. Malone.

"No, Hi did n't, 'cos w'y? 'Cos 'is Royal 'Ighness never hopens the door till Hi says come hin. 'Ee 's got better manners, 'ee 'as," replied the boy.

The landlady, not at all impressed, snapped her fingers scornfully

"That for you and the prince," she said, her nose in the air.

"Mrs. Malone, you 're a hanarchist," declared Buster, shocked beyond expression.

"Mr. Buster, you 're a liar," replied the landlady, promptly.

"You 're no judge, Mrs. Malone. We honly puts hup with hanarchy from Mr. Dyke, the poet, who comes 'ere and reads 'is treason reeking verses to Mr. Moore. One hanarchist on hour calling list is enough."

"You call me that name again, and I 'll smack you," exclaimed Mrs. Malone, pugnaciously.

"Smack me!" echoed Buster, in trepidation. "Hif you kisses me, Mrs. Malone, Hi 'll scream."

"Kiss you, indeed!" snorted the landlady, scornfully.

"Don't you dare," warned Buster, getting behind a table for greater safety.

"Is your good-for-nothing master in?"

"Hi am not hacquainted with no such hindividual. Hif you means Mr. Moore, 'ee 's hout."

Mrs. Malone looked her disbelief, and pointed grimly to the boots, which Buster had dropped upon the table.

"Oh," said Buster, a trifle dashed, but rallying immediately, "these is souvenirs of the great poet. This goes to 'is Reverence the Harchbishop of Canterbury to be used as a snuff box, and this his to stand on the dressing-table of Mrs. Fitz'erbert 'erself. She will put 'er combings hinto it."

"Thot jezebel?" ejaculated the woman, with a sniff of disdain.

"But Mrs. Fitz'erbert does n't 'ail from Jersey," corrected Buster. "She 's from Wicklow, Hireland."

"She 's not," cried Mrs. Malone in a high dudgeon. "We don't raise her kind there. Only dacent people like me comes from the Vale of Avoca."

Buster looked interested.

"Say, tell us, his there hany more like you there?" he asked anxiously.

"There is," replied Mrs. Malone, proudly, "but none betther."

"Hit 's a good thing Hireland is so far horf, is n't it?" said the boy in a tone of cordial congratulation.

Mrs. Malone threw a boot at him by way of answer, but, instead of striking Buster, it flew through the entrance to the adjoining room and was heard to strike noisily on the head board of the bed.

"Oh—h—h!" came from within.

"There, you 'as done it, Mrs. Malone," said the boy reproachfully.

"Hullo, there," said the voice, sleepily. "Much obliged, I am sure. Who hit me with a boot? Eh? Buster, I 'll have your British blood to pay for it."

"If you do," responded Mrs. Malone, emphatically, "it will be the first thing you 've paid for in many a day."

"What?" said the voice. "Do I hear the dulcet tones of my lovely landlady?"

Mrs. Malone gave a sniff of concentrated scorn.

"Niver mind your blarney, Tom Moore," said she. "Where is the rint?"

"What would I be doing with it?" came from behind the curtain.

"I knows," replied Mrs. Malone, indignantly. "You would be sending flowers to some actress at the theayter over on Drury Lane, instead of paying me. Thot 's what you 'd be doing, young sir."

"You 've guessed it the first time," admitted Moore, "and that is all the good it would do me. She won't look at me, Mrs. Malone."

"Small blame to her since that shows she 's a dacint, sensible colleen," replied the landlady, in tones of conviction, as her lodger drew aside the curtains of the doorway, and stepped out into the room.

Tom Moore it was, but such a different youth from the one who in Ireland had pestered the little schoolmistress with his loving attentions. Trouble and privation had thinned and hollowed his jolly face; lines of worry and disappointment were crossed round his eyes. His mouth was as sweet and tender as of yore, but the impertinent nose stood forth much more sharply.

He looked ten years older, but the same winning smile played around his lips, and in its light the shadows of want and hopelessness vanished from his face like fog 'neath the warming touch of sunbeams. He was only half dressed, the absence of coat, vest, and stock being concealed beneath the enveloping folds of an old brocade dressing-gown, which undoubtedly had once been a magnificent affair, but now was only too much in harmony with the surrounding squalor.

"Sweet Mistress Malone, with your eyes deep and blue,
Don't ask me for rent, for I 'm telling you true,
'T would make me a bankrupt if I should pay you,
So let the rent slide like a darling, — Now *do*."

As Moore extemporized he laid his hand insinuatingly upon the landlady's muscular arm, but she threw it off roughly as he finished.

"You can't plaster me, Tom Moore," she declared, loudly.

Buster and Lord Castlereagh retired to a safe distance and watched proceedings with eager eyes.

"Plaster you?" repeated Moore, meditatively, then suddenly laying hands upon her, hé twirled the old lady gently around. "Why should I plaster you when nature has covered your laths so nicely?"

"Don't touch me, you young divil," Mrs. Malone ejaculated. "How dare you take such liberties?"

"Mine is only a friendly interest," protested Moore.

"I wants no impudence."

"Who said you were wanting in impudence?" demanded Moore. "Tell me the wretch's name, and I 'll attend to his business."

"Nivir mind," replied the landlady, picking up the mate to the boot she had hurled at Buster. "It 's

high time you had new boots. I 'll have no tramps or ragbags lodging here."

"Mrs. Malone," said Moore, cheerfully, "I quite agree with you. I am pleased to say I shall have a new pair to-day."

"You will, will you?" retorted the old woman. "We hear ducks."

"I don't hear either ducks or geese. Do you, Buster?"

"Hi 'ears Mrs. Malone, sir," replied the lad, stepping behind the bulldog for safety's sake.

"The mistake is natural," answered Moore. "You were saying —?"

"There is not a shoemaker in London who would trust you, Tom Moore, nor any other tradesman," said Mrs. Malone, on whom the foregoing piece of impudence was quite thrown away.

"Nevertheless, I 'll bet you the back rent — the all the way back rent, Mrs. Malone — I have a grand new pair to-day," declared Moore, defiantly. "Am I right, Buster?"

"Yessir, that we will," asserted that staunch ally.

"Niver mind thot," replied the landlady, extending her palm. "Misther Moore, I 'll thank you for the rint."

Moore took her hand and pressed it warmly.

"No thanks are necessary," he said briskly, "since I have n't it."

The old woman snatched her fingers away with a vigor that nearly upset her lodger.

"I 'll have thot rint," she exclaimed.

"I sincerely hope so, Mrs. Malone, though how you 'll get it I can't see."

"I 'll make you see."

"That is very accommodating, I am sure."

"You must raise it, Misther Moore, or I 'll have to have me attic."

Moore looked at her admiringly.

"Ah, Mrs. Malone, surely such a face never went with any but a kind heart," he said gently.

"Thot 'll do you, young sir," replied the landlady, quite unimpressed.

"Ah!" continued the poet, with a sigh. "You are not true Irish, Mrs. Malone."

"You know betther, Tom Moore. Was n't it my old man, God rest his good soul in peace, that taught you your A-B-C's in Ireland? Yes it was, and many 's the time he said to me, 'Thot bye would blarny the horns off a cow's forehead if he cud spake her language.'"

"Oh! those were the good old days!" began the poet, hoping to touch a sentimental spot in the old lady's memory.

"Yis, I know all thot," she interrupted. "You almost worried the poor man to death."

"Well," said Moore, half seriously, "you are getting even with me now, are n't you?"

"Niver mind thot. If you don't pay me, out you walk this day, me bucko."

"Won't you let me run if I prefer it?"

"No impudence! When will you pay me?"

Moore turned to Buster, interrogatively.

"When, my lad, will it be most convenient for us to pay Mrs. Malone?" he asked, gravely.

Buster scratched his head and pondered, but no answer was forthcoming, so Moore decided to depend upon his own resources for a satisfactory reply.

"After I am dressed," said he. "Come back in half an hour when I am dressed and I 'll pay you."

"Very well, then," replied Mrs. Malone, "I 'll come up again in half an hour by the clock. And no tricks. I 'm watching the hall, so you can't get away. Do you hear? *I 'm watching* the hall."

Moore nodded his head approvingly.

"Quite right, Mrs. Malone," said he. "It 's nice to know there is no danger of the hall being stolen. Sure, what would we do without it?"

"Bah!" exclaimed the landlady, and with her head held scornfully high, she marched out, slamming the door by way of rebuke to the levity of her lodger.

"My heye!" exclaimed Buster, breathing more freely. "She 's more wicious than usual to-day, Mr. Moore."

"I know, lad, but we can't blame her," replied the poet. "She is a good old soul, and, as she says, it was her husband who first whacked knowledge into me."

"Hi suppose 'ee were a fine scholard."

"Well," said Moore, "he was all right when he was sober, but he was never sober that I remember. He was always in high spirits as a result of the spirits being high in him. However, that has nothing to do with the rent. Is the ladder that leads to the roof of the house next door out the window?"

"Yessir," said Buster. "You can go hout the same way you did yesterday."

"Good," said Moore, "then I won't have to disturb Mrs. Malone's watch on the hall."

"No, sir, that you won't."

Moore looked at the boy gravely and got a smile in return which in extent could compare not unfavorably

with one of Lord Castlereagh's most expansive yawns.

"Buster," said the poet, slowly and sadly, "there is something I feel it my duty to say to you. Let us be in sober earnest for once, my lad."

"Yes, sir," assented the boy uneasily, stooping to pull the bulldog's ragged ear. "Hat your service, Mr. Moore."

Moore was silent for a moment, and when he did speak it was with an effort quite apparent.

"Buster," he said, softly, "it is time we came to an understanding. I am head over ears in debt as you know. I owe every tradesman in the neighborhood, and as many out of it as I could get introduced to. I am a failure as a writer, bitter as it is for me to acknowledge it. Only a little while longer, and it will be the streets and starvation, Buster."

"Don't, sir, don't," said the boy, a queer little break in his voice, but Moore continued:

"I 'm wronging you in keeping you with me, laddie. Don't waste any more of your time with me. I am only holding you back."

"Hand if Hi went, sir," asked the boy, pitifully, "wot would become hof *you?*"

"I?" murmured Moore, choking back a sob. "There is n't much doubt, is there?"

"Who 'd black your boots for you, hand 'eat your shaving water, hand listen to your poetry, sir?" demanded Buster, wiping his eyes with his shirt sleeve. "Blow me hif I 'ave n't a cold in me 'ead. My heyes is runnin' somethink hawful hall day."

"It 's best for you, Buster," insisted Moore, laying his hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder.

"Hit ain't hanythink o' the kind, hand I won't go, sir," declared Buster in an apologetically defiant tone. "No, sir, Hi *won't* go."

"You won't, Buster?"

"Wot would that young lady hover at Drury Lane think o' me, hif I left you halone?"

Moore sighed at the thought of her.

"She would n't care, Buster," he murmured.

"Would n't she? Then she 'as an 'eart of hice, that 's wot she 'as, sir, wid hall the beautiful pomes we 'ave sent 'er."

"But you are getting no wages, Buster," protested Moore.

"Well, sir," the boy answered, "Hi 'as a situation, Hi 'as. That 's more 'n you 'as, his n't it?"

His voice died away in a snuffle, and he clutched his master by the arm appealingly.

"You won't send me away?" he asked, piteously. "You won't, will you, Mr. Moore."

Moore, touched to the heart at the lad's generous devotion, felt the tears gathering in his eyes, but forced them back with an effort, though his voice shook as he answered:

"My dear, brave, little fellow, how can I doubt Providence when there is one such loyal heart near me? Stay, Buster. We will rise or fall together."

As he spoke he held his hand out to the boy, who took it joyfully.

"Yessir, that we will, sir. You hand me, hand Lord Castlereagh."

The bulldog, as though understanding the situation, thrust his cold nose in Moore's hand, and wagged his tail sympathetically as the poet crossed to the fireplace

after patting the ugly head, rough with the scars of years of battling.

"Buster," continued Moore, without turning round.

"Yessir?"

"May God bless you, lad," said the poet, bowing his head on the mantelpiece to hide the tears that would come in spite of him.

"Thank you, sir."

Then as Moore dropped into the old arm-chair beside the hearth, the boy, resolved to wake him from his unhappy mood, burst into song, rendering one of his master's most recent productions in a style worthy of a scissor-grinding machine.

"Horf in the stilly night
H'ere slumber's chains 'as bound me,
The shadows hof hother days
Comes a-gathering round me."

Moore, roused to mental activity by the racket, sat bolt upright in dismay.

"Buster!" he cried, reprovingly, but the boy continued at the top of his lungs as though he had not heard.

"The smiles, the tears,
Hof boyish years —"

Bang! came a book against the door from across the room, missing Buster, who had dodged, by a few inches.

"For Heaven's sake stop that caterwauling," cried Moore. "You put my teeth on edge."

Lord Castlereagh became victim of a hallucination that the book thrown by Moore was a rat of large size, and was fast shaking the life out of it

when Buster descended upon him and effected a rescue.

"Blow me, Lord Castlereagh, if you hain't a knocking the stuffin' hout of 'The Rivals,'" he remarked reprovingly.

"Out of the rivals?" said Moore, with a laugh. "Faith, I 'd like to try the same game on mine, Buster. It 's the simplest way, after all; is n't it, doggie?"

Lord Castlereagh became quite giddy, and, possessed by a puppyish fancy, decided upon an immediate and vigorous pursuit of his stumpy tail as the proceeding next in order, prosecuting his endeavor with such enthusiasm that he collided violently with everything in the room, including Moore and Buster, in the space of a moment, abandoning his enterprise only when winded as a result of running broadside on against a wall.

"Will you heat your dinner now, sir?" asked Buster.

"Dinner? What have you?"

"Leaving hout the rest of the bill of fare, there 's a slice hof 'am hand 'arf a loaf of bread, hand a little hof that Hirish wisky your sister sent you from Hireland fer your birthday."

Rummaging in the cupboard, Buster speedily brought to light the little stone jug containing what was left of the girl's gift, and as Moore seated himself at the table, which also served as desk when needed, the boy placed the whisky before him.

"Ah!" said the poet, his eyes glistening as he uncorked it. "That 's the real old stuff. That 's what puts the life into a man, eh, lad?"

As he spoke, Moore held up the jug, and shutting an eye endeavored to peer into it.

"There is n't much life left in it, Buster."

Then, taking a whiff, the poet smacked his lips, but placed the jug upon the table, its contents untouched.

"No," he said, shaking his head, "it is too precious to waste. I must save that, laddie."

"Yessir," said Buster, "fer some joyous hoccasion. 'Ave hanother smell, sir?"

"No, no," exclaimed Moore, waving the boy away. "Get thee behind me, Satan. Don't tempt me, Buster, for I am not over strong in that direction. Cork it up tightly. They say it evaporates and it 's too good to have even a drop wasted."

Buster stowed the little jug in the depths of the cupboard and returned briskly to where Moore was eating his dinner.

"Hi 've seen the shoemakers, sir," he announced.

"Ah, did you?"

"Yessir. The boots is hall done hand ready to be delivered."

"Good enough," commented Moore. "Did you appoint a time for them to come?"

"Hi did that, sir. One will be 'ere at four, the hother at twenty minutes past the hower," replied the youth, shaking his finger warningly at Lord Castlereagh, who manifested more interest in the eatables than was in strict accordance with good manners.

"First rate, Buster," said Moore, approvingly. "Is there any other news?"

The boy hesitated a moment, but with an effort continued:

"Yessir, that ain't hall. Hi 'as a confession to make, sir."

"You have?" said Moore in a surprised tone. "Well, let 's have it, my lad."

"Yessir —"

"One moment, Buster," exclaimed the poet, an expression of alarm coming over his face. "One moment in which to compose myself. Now I am calmer. Tell me, Buster, tell me you have n't secretly married Mrs. Malone?"

"Married *'ell!*" exclaimed the lad, his nose turning up in disdain at the idea.

"'T would be much the same thing, I 'm thinking," chuckled Moore. "Well, that is one peril escaped. Go on with your confession."

"You know that pome you sent me with to the *Times,* sir?" began Buster, still ill at ease.

"'The Last Rose of Summer,' was n't it?"

"Yessir. Hi did n't take it to the *Times.*"

"You did n't? Why not, Buster?"

"Hit was this way, sir, just 'as Hi wuz a coming by Carlton 'Ouse, who should Hi see stepping hout 'er carriage but Mrs. Fitz'erbert 'erself, looking that sweet and beautiful has would make your mouth water."

"So there is a woman in it, after all?" observed Moore. "'T was ever thus, Buster."

"Yessir, so wot does Hi do but rip horf the wrapper hand run hup to 'er with the poem, hand sticks hit into 'er 'and. 'That 's for you,' ses Hi, hand tips me 'at hand is horf through the crowd like a hantelope."

"Nicely done, Buster," said Moore. "It may come in handy for her ladyship. She can make curlpapers of it. Well, you are forgiven, my boy."

"Thank you, sir," said Buster, greatly relieved.

"Was my name signed?"

"Yessir, hand your haddress too."

"Very good, Buster. Perhaps she 'll come to call and bring the Prince of Wales with her."

"Well, sir," replied Buster, "hit 's my hopinion has 'ow neither hov 'em is one bit too good for hus."

"That sounds like treason, Buster."

"Does it, sir?" cried Buster, apparently delighted to hear it.

A knock at the door disturbed both servant and master, as well as arousing suspicions of the worst nature in the bosom of Lord Castlereagh, who growled ominously.

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Moore, rising hurriedly from the table, which was saved from an upset by the quick hand of Buster. "Is it the rent again?"

Buster tiptoed to the door as the knock was repeated, and whispered, after listening:

"Hit s all right, sir. Who is it?"

"It 's Mr. Dyke," declared the person desirous of entering.

Moore's face fell.

"With another treasonable poem, I suppose," he muttered. "Worse luck."

"Wot does you listen to 'em for?" asked Buster, disgustedly, leaving the door as Moore crossed to open it.

"Ah, that is the question," said the poet, softly.

"Hi knows," remarked Buster under his breath. "'Cos 'ee 's 'er father, that 's why."

"Come in, Mr. Dyke," said Moore, opening the door. "How are you to-day, sir?"

"Oh, very well, Thomas," replied the old gentle-

man, entering with a self-satisfied air. "How do you, my boy?"

Mr. Dyke's dress showed that he was enjoying prosperity. His coat and hat had hardly lost their appearance of newness, while the rest of his costume, though evidently not of recent purchase, was of good quality, greatly exceeding in costliness the apparel in which he was wont to garb himself in Ireland.

"I have nothing to complain of so far as health is concerned, Mr. Dyke. Buster, a chair for the gentleman."

"I have come to read you a poem, Thomas."

"Indeed?" said Moore. "Buster, two chairs for the gentleman."

"You will have your joke, Thomas," observed Mr. Dyke, with an indulgent smile, as he seated himself.

"I have n't much else, sir," said Moore, "that 's why I value it so highly. How is Bessie, sir?"

"She is well and working hard on her new part. The new piece is produced at Drury Lane in a week."

"I know," said Moore. "Bessie is getting on, is n't she?"

"Indeed she is, Thomas," replied Mr. Dyke, proudly. "The manager says if she does as well as he expects in the next piece, he will allow her to play Lydia in a revival of Mr. Sheridan's great comedy, 'The Rivals.'"

"So they revive Dicky's play? They do well, for they have had nothing since to equal it except 'The School for Scandal.'"

The old gentleman cleared his throat modestly.

"Quite true, Thomas, and for that very reason I am preparing to write a comedy myself."

"Bravo, sir. Surely it is a shame only one Irishman should wear laurels for play-writing."

"Do you know Mr. Sheridan, Thomas?"

"Not I, sir, though both of us received our education at the same school some thirty years apart. Dr. Whyte taught us both, and admits even now that he considered Sheridan but little better than a dunce."

"So I have heard Mr. Sheridan himself declare," observed Mr. Dyke. "A great man, Thomas, a great man."

"You know him, sir?" asked Moore, a shade of envy for a moment perceptible in his voice.

"I met him a fortnight ago at Sir Percival's house. Needless to say I was honored, Thomas."

"Quite needless, sir. Was he sober?"

"Part of the time," answered Mr. Dyke, reluctantly.

"Ah," said Moore, "that must have been early in the evening. Does Bessie know him?"

"Yes, Thomas. He was so kind as to give her his personal opinion of the airs and graces suitable as business for the character of Lydia, for he will have no one even mention the possibility of her not obtaining the part."

"Look here now," said Moore, quickly. "You just bear in mind what sort of a killer that same gay old lad is with the ladies. I 'll not have him making love to Bessie, if I have to tell him so on the street. He is an old rake, sir, and there is no more dangerous man in London, for all his years."

"Tut, tut, Thomas," said Mr. Dyke in benign reproof. "Mr. Sheridan is a married man."

"I know," replied Moore, doubtfully, "but I have often heard that they are the worst kind. By the way,

how is that distinguished philanthropist, Sir Percival Lovelace?"

"You must not sneer at him, Thomas. Bessie and I owe everything to him."

"Never fear. He expects to be paid one way or another," growled Moore, full of suspicions but absolutely lacking in proof.

"Thanks to his influence, my verses are much in demand. No doubt you have seen a number of them published?"

"I have that, and read them eagerly. Ah, you too are getting up in the world, Mr. Dyke."

"I flatter myself it is so," replied the old gentleman pompously. "Shall I speak a word to Sir Percival in your favor, Thomas? He could help you much, being, as you know, an intimate friend of the Prince himself."

"Thank you, no," answered Moore, savagely. "I 'll get where I aim without his assistance or rot where I am contentedly. You don't see Sir Percival as I do, sir."

"Evidently not," replied Mr. Dyke, blandly. "I find in him a firm and powerful friend, who has exerted himself much in my behalf, while you regard him as —"

"My view of him is n't fit for such lips as yours, Mr. Dyke," interrupted Moore. "We will say no more about him. I only hope you may be correct in your opinion of the gentleman."

"Have you heard the news from home?" asked Mr. Dyke, polishing his glasses, preparatory to unrolling the manuscript, which he had placed upon the table between them.

"Not I, sir. It 's a fortnight since I have heard

from my mother, though I write to her twice a week. Father is ailing, no doubt. He is getting on in years, you know. But then their news is only of Dublin. I have heard nothing from Dalky at all."

"Winnie Farrell was married to Captain Arbuckle last Wednesday week."

Moore gave a start.

"You don't say so, sir? Are you sure?"

"Sure as man can be. They are off on their honeymooning now. I had a letter from Squire Farrell himself. By the way, Terence has come to London and is studying law."

"I hope the rascal will keep out of my way," said Moore, viciously. "A sneak, if ever there was one."

"You quarrelled with him, Thomas?"

"I did, sir, and licked him well, too. Tell me, Mr. Dyke, is Bessie still angry with me?"

The old gentleman sighed and put on his glasses.

"I am afraid so, Thomas," he said, gravely. "She never mentions your name, though I do my best to interest her in your doings. Now for the poem, lad. It is a satire, Thomas, a satire on the Prince of Wales. Oh, I cook him to a turn, Thomas. Ah, how he would squirm if I dared to have it published."

Moore leaned over the table and took the manuscript from his guest in a manner more vigorous than polite.

"If you did have it published, you'd be dropped by society like a hot potato, and Bessie would lose her position at Drury Lane," he said. "You would be in a nice fix then, would n't you, Robin Dyke, Esquire?"

"If worst came to worst, even then I would still

have the pension guaranteed me by Sir Percival," replied the elder poet, obstinately.

"You would," assented Moore, emphatically, "*for about five minutes.* Mr. Dyke, Irishman and patriot that you are, you do wrong every time you write a line that compromises your position here in London. Thanks to the efforts of Sir Percival, you have been nicely received; your verses are purchased and printed; success such as you have never known before is yours, and yet in spite of all this that old taint in you leads you to write in secret poems which would be your ruin if they ever saw the light. Good God, sir! Have you no thought of Bessie at all? You must think of Bessie. *You must.*"

Mr. Dyke, thus forcibly rebuked, grew red in the face, and seemed for a moment about to hotly point out the disregard paid by his young friend to the difference in their ages, but his better nature prevailed as his sense of justice showed him plainly that Moore was in the right; so, after a short silence, he accepted his host's criticism in the same spirit it was offered.

"You are right, Thomas," said he, reluctantly, "quite right, my lad; but remember that I never read such verses to any one but you. I must admit I thoroughly enjoy giving occasional vent to my real feelings. It 's like throwing a load off my heart, Thomas."

"I know how you feel," replied Moore, sagely, "but take my advice, and throw off no more loads that way."

"Thomas, I won't. I promise I 'll not write another."

"Good, Mr. Dyke," exclaimed Moore, gladly. "It

is delighted I am to hear you say that. Ah, sir, if I were where you are, I 'd run no such danger, I can tell you."

"Shall I read it to you, Thomas?" asked the old gentleman, resolved to extract all possible enjoyment from this bit of treason, since it was to have no successor.

"Leave it with me," suggested Moore, endeavoring to postpone its perusal to the last moment possible. "I 'll read it to myself and study your method thoroughly. It will be a greater help to me that way, you know, and I am anxious to learn, sir."

Dyke gave a flattered cough or two and rose to go.

"You must not be discouraged, Thomas," he said in a kindly patronizing tone, "your verses have merit, *real* merit. I 'll stake my reputation upon it."

"It 's kind of you to say that," said Moore, gratefully, though in secret vastly amused, "a successful man like you."

"Oh, I mean it, Thomas, I mean it. Why, some day I 'd not be surprised if you were rated as a poet almost as high as Robin Dyke."

"You don't mean it, sir?"

"Almost, I said *almost,*" repeated the old gentleman, fearful lest he had raised hope too high in his fellow author's breast.

"I heard you," said Moore, dryly, while Buster and Lord Castlereagh shared their indignation at the fireplace to which they had retired.

"I must get along now," announced Mr. Dyke, as though desirous of gently breaking the news of his approaching departure. "Oh, you will laugh your sides sore when you read that poem, Thomas."

"Will I?" asked Moore, doubtfully.

Mr. Dyke turned at the door with a chuckle.

"I almost envy you the fun, my lad. Oh, it 's monstrous witty."

And fairly shaking with merriment at the mental contemplation of his own humor, the old gentleman toddled down the stairs, quite at peace with the world at large and even more satisfied with himself.

"My best love to Bessie," Moore called after him, leaning over the banisters.

"Have you the rint?" came from below in the unmistakably Hibernian accents of Mrs. Malone.

"No, I have n't, have you?" shouted the disgusted poet, and hastening back into the room, he shut the door.

"Rank halmost as 'igh as 'im," exclaimed Buster, indignantly. "Well Hi likes 'is himpudence. Say, Mr. Moore, Hi thinks that hold cove is daffy."

"They say genius is akin to madness," replied Moore, stowing the poem away in the drawer of the table, where he kept many productions of his own.

"Then 'ee 's been achin' a long time," replied the boy, misunderstanding the meaning of his master's remark.

Moore laughed gently and did not correct him.

Chapter Ten

IN WHICH THE LANDLADY IS PLAYED A TRICK

IN the meantime Mrs. Malone, having pounded upstairs, halted in front of the door, not from politeness, but to regain her breath. Having paused, she decided to knock, unconsciously mindful of Buster's scathing rebuke.

"Who is there?" asked Buster.

"Me, for me money," responded the landlady, determinedly. "Is there any sin in asking for what is due me?"

"As much sin as there is use," muttered Moore. "I can't go over the roof like this, Buster. I have it. Tell her I am taking a bath."

"Yessir," said the boy, starting towards the door as Moore sought shelter with pail and pitcher of water behind an old screen standing in the corner of the room.

"My *cold* bath, Buster," whispered Moore.

"Yessir."

"And, Buster?"

"Yessir."

"You get out when she comes in."

"Hi will, sir," responded Buster preparing to open the door.

"Am I to die of old age in my own hall?" demanded Mrs. Malone, waxing indignant.

"You 'as your choice hof complaints, *madam*," replied Buster, opening the door.

"You limb!" said she, misunderstanding the lad's unusual politeness. "I 'll not have any half-baked omadhaun cursing me."

"Curse you, Mrs. Malone? Himpossible, hon my word of honer. W'y Hi 'as narthin but blessin's fer you, *sweetheart*."

Mrs. Malone aimed a blow at Buster's ear, and, as he dodged successfully, swung half around with the misspent energy of her effort. Buster sought safety in the hall, but thrust his head in the doorway.

"Mr. Moore his taking 'is cold bawth," he announced, loudly.

A splashing of water coming from behind the screen corroborated the lad's statement.

"Taking his bath, is he?" said Mrs. Malone. "It 's the only thing he can take widout getting arresthed."

"Hit 's 'is *hown*, Mrs. Malone."

"Are you sure of thot?"

"W'y h'are you so suspicious, Mrs. Malone? 'Ave *you* missed one?"

"Niver you mind prying into the secrets of me toilet. I 'll have you to understand —"

At this moment a ragged towel, soaking wet as the result of its immersion in the pail, sailed over the top of the screen and landed with a gurgling squash, fair and square on the back of the landlady's neck, dampening her collar and best cap so thoroughly that the starched linen immediately subsided into floppy limpness.

"Merciful powers!" ejaculated Mrs. Malone, jumping a foot at least. "Phwat 's thot?"

Buster fled downstairs fearful of impending massacre, while Moore behind the screen began giving an imitation of a man in the throes of an ice-cold bath, bursting into musicless song punctuated with exclamations of discomfort and shivery comments on his condition.

"She is far from the land,"

he shouted, slopping the water from pitcher to pail and back again, adding *sotto voce,* "But not from the landlady, worse luck — Oh! I'll die of the cold! I know I will. Oh, mother, it's a cake of ice your beloved Thomas is fast becoming.

"Where her young hero sleeps,

— Only her young hero is freezing instead of sleeping. Help! Help! Whew-w-w! Murder, murder, I'm dying of the chill!"

Mrs. Malone in speechless rage had unwound the wet towel from around her neck.

"You divil!" she remarked, with the calmness of despair. "You red-handed rapscallion. You've spiled me best Sunday Get-Up-and-Go-to-Early-Morning-Mass-Cap. Oh, you haythen! — you turk! Hanging is too good for the likes of you."

Moore, bawling and singing at the top of his lungs, heard nothing of the landlady's desperation.

"And lovers around her are sighing,
But coldly she turns —

Faith, the dear girl must have been taking a cold bath herself, I'm thinking. Oh, murder! No! For, if that were so, how could the lovers be around her? No, indeed, no lady decent enough for Tom Moore

to immortalize in song would be guilty of such immodesty, I am sure.

"But coldly she turns from their gaze and weeps,
For her heart in his grave is lying.

A beautiful sentiment, Mr. Moore."

"Oh, where is that soap?" and then again bursting into song, he warbled:

"Where *is* that soap?
Where is *that* soap?
Oh, *where* in Blazes *is* that so-o-o-ap?

Buster, you devil, bring me the soap."

"I 'll do nuthing of the kind," replied Mrs. Malone, ferociously.

"You won't?"

"Not I."

"In half a jiffy I 'll come out there and give you the leathering you deserve for insubordination."

"Oh!" cried the landlady. "And me here, Bridget Malone."

"What?" exclaimed Moore, as though suspecting her presence for the first time. "Are *you* there, Mrs. Malone? Whew! but this water is cold."

His head, with hair, wet and tousled, sticking up every which way, appeared above the top of the screen, being elevated just enough to keep his shirt band out of sight, thus preventing the betrayal of his subterfuge to the landlady.

"How do you do, Mrs. Malone?" said he, courteously.

"I 'm sopping wet, thanks to you."

"So am I, Mrs. Malone. We are twins in that respect. Me teeth are chattering as you can see-e-e-e!"

"I 'll have thot rint now, you blaggard."

"Shall I come and give it to you, Mrs. Malone? Oh, Lord, it is freezing to death I am."

"I hope you are; when you die you 'll git a change," answered Mrs. Malone, sitting down by the table, decisively.

"Are you going to stay?" asked Moore.

"I 'll sit right here till I git me rint, Tom Moore."

"You will, eh?"

"Thot I will, you water t'rowing spalpeen."

"I said come back when I am dressed, did n't I? Well, I 'm *not* dressed, am I?"

"How should I know?" observed Mrs. Malone, loudly, meanwhile mopping her neck with her handkerchief.

"Well," responded the poet, "you *will* know, if you don't get out of here mighty quick, I can tell you. I 'll not be turned into a lump of ice for any old lady, Irish or no Irish. Whe-ee! Oh-h-h! G-r-r-r-h! When I get into the market the price of ice will drop a penny a pound."

"I wants me rint," reiterated the landlady, quite unconcerned as to her lodger's personal temperature.

"Do you think I have it in the tub with me?" demanded Moore, growing desperate.

"I 've no doubt you have as much of it there as anywhere," replied Mrs. Malone, unconsciously hitting the nail on the head.

"I 'll give you till I count twenty to quit the premises."

"Twenty or twenty t'ousand is just the same to me, Mr. Moore."

"Then you have no head for figures, Mrs. Malone?"

"Not I, Tom Moore."

"Well, there is one figure you 'll know more about if you don't skip, and that is the one of Thomas Moore, Esquire."

"If you do, I 'll have you arresthed."

"All right, Mrs. Malone. My frozen blood be upon your head. No, by St. Patrick, I 'll not ice myself even to oblige you. Out you go, my lady. One — two — three. Will you go?"

"Not I, sorr!"

"Eight — nine — ten — Are you going?"

"Divil a fut will I."

"Twelve — thirteen — sixteen — Now are you ready?"

"I 'm not, sorr."

"Eighteen — nineteen — !"

"Oh-h!" cried Mrs. Malone, intimidated at last by the poet's determination, "I will, Misther Moore, I will."

And gathering up her skirts she rushed for the door, reaching it just as Buster entered, the collision sending that young gentleman sprawling on the floor.

"Thank ye very kindly, ma'am," he remarked, saluting her in military fashion from his lowered altitude.

"Thot for your t'anks," she sniffed, and made her exit, signifying her scorn and dissatisfaction by the vigor with which she shut the door.

Moore emerged from behind the screen with a sigh of relief.

"Oh, Buster, my boy," he said breathlessly, "there is nothing like cold water for starting the circulation. What would I do without my tubbing?"

"She 'll be back hagain, sir," said Buster, sighing at the thought. "Hi wish 'er hold man was halive. 'Ee would n't be so 'ard hon us, would 'ee?"

"Well, I am not so sure about that," answered Moore. "He was very fond of the bottle, was Mr. Malone. Usually he 'd not get up till noon, leaving us to fight and play around the schoolroom till he got over the effects of the night before. Then he 'd wallop the lot of us for waking him up so early."

"Was she fond of 'im?"

"She was, Buster! Much more, probably, than she would have been if he had been a better husband."

"Just himagine Bridget Malone a-courtin'. D' ye suppose has 'ow the hold gal remembers it, sir?"

"I would n't be surprised, Buster. Such memories grow dearer as old age approaches. By the Saints, lad, you 've given me an idea!"

"'As I?" said the boy in surprise. "Hi did n't know has I 'ad one."

"You have fixed it so I can stand her off for the rent or my name is not Thomas Moore," answered the poet cheerfully. "We 'll not have to move this day, Buster."

"Ho, that 's fine, sir. Me and Lord Castlereagh 'ates moving. Does n't we, pup?"

The bulldog barked exultantly catching the key of hope from his master's voice.

"Hof corse," said Buster, "when worst comes to worst we can keep the place by setting Lord Castlereagh to watch the stairs. No landlady hor bailiff wud hever git by 'im, sir."

"That would be what is known as a dogged re-

sistance of authority," said Moore, chuckling at his bad joke. "We must n't come to that, lad."

"Hall right, sir, we won't."

Moore returned to his temporarily abandoned repast and speedily ate his fill, Buster and the dog sharing alike in the débris, which was more than enough to afford satisfaction to them both.

"Now, I 'll try to work," said Moore, arming himself with a huge quill, the feathered end of which being well chewed, seemed indicative of having furnished food for reflection to its owner in the immediate past. He sat down at the table, scrupulously cleaned and dusted by Buster after he had removed the dishes, and, drawing a blank sheet of paper towards him, dipped the pen in the ink, preparatory to calling upon his inspiration. But that was as far as he got, for the desired idea failed to materialize.

"Hang it!" he said, throwing down the pen in disgust, "I can't write a line. How can I expect to when nothing is in my mind but Bessie? Ah, Bessie, Bessie, you 've taken my heart; now you rob me of my fancy. It will be my life next, if I 'm not careful."

"Can't you think hof nothin', Mr. Moore?" asked Buster, anxiously.

"I 'm thinking of the greatest thing in the world, lad."

"Ho, Hi knows wot that is: love."

"Do you think so, Buster?"

"No, sir, but you does. W'y, sir, gals gives me pains. Hi would n't swap one paw of Lord Castlereagh for the 'ole sex. Wot good is they? They can't fight —"

"It is evident, Buster, that you have never been

married," interrupted Moore. "However, continue with your oration. I am interested."

"His yer?" said Buster, much delighted. "Well that his fine. Hi 'll continyer. They can't fight, that is not with their fisties, hat least not hin accordance with the rules o' the ring. They is timid, hand selfish! My Lord, hain't they selfish! Halways thinking about 'ow they look; hand eating! — W'y, sir, a girl is nine-tenths happetite and the rest 'unger. Clothes and vittles his all they thinks is worth while, hand the devotion hand effort to please with wich we honors them hain't naught but about 'arf wot they thinks they deserves. A gal, sir, thinks has 'ow she does the earth a service, w'en she puts 'er footsy down hupon it. 'Arf of 'em himagines they consecrates the ground they walk on. Hexcuse me w'en it comes to gals. Hi could n't 'ave 'em squallin' and complainin' hany where Hi 'm at. Hand then, sir, they is sich fearsome liars. They never 'ad no hintroduction to truth, sir. W'y they can honly tell it w'en they 'ears it, hand w'en they repeats it they halways dresses it hup with himaginations like they 'd pile fancy clothes hon their hown hanatomy previous to hattending some bloomin' masquerade. Facts halways assumes a disguise hafter a hincounter wid females. Believe 'em we could n't and we would n't, would we, doggie?"

"Woof!" remarked Lord Castlereagh, playfully nipping at Buster's shoestring.

"Quite right, pupsy, you halways agrees with me; there, sir, that 's one thing a wife won't do, his n't it?"

"I wish I could forswear dependence as you have done, Buster," said Moore with a sigh, "but it 's no

use. I have n't the strength of mind. By the way, lad, did you sell the empty wine-bottles?"

"No, sir, but Hi'll tend to it very soon, sir. Hi'll get 'em hout right away," replied Buster, suiting the action to the word. From the cupboard he took six bottles which once upon a time, though not very recently, had contained sherry. These he stood upon a stool and was about to ransack the depths of the closet in quest of more when there came a rapping at the door.

"Hit 's Mr. Dabble from the wine-shop, sir," announced Buster, after opening the door a little.

"Tell Mr. Dabble I did n't order any wine," said Moore, crossly. "Will I never get started on this poem?"

Buster conveyed the mentioned information to the clerk and received a reply in return that he felt justified in delivering.

"Mr. Dabble says has 'ow hit 's a cursed lucky thing you did n't horder hanythink, and has 'ow it would n't do you hany good hif you hordered till Kingdom Come, sir."

"He said that, did he?" said Moore, angrily, rousing from his labors.

"Yes, sir. Shall Hi mash 'im in the phisomy?"

"No, Buster, I can't blame Mr. Porter for being angry, for it 's a dog's age since I have paid him anything," answered Moore.

"Shall Hi let 'im hin?"

"Not yet, Buster. First ask him what *ails the stout Mr. Porter?*"

Buster snorted with merriment and repeated his master's question to the fellow in the hall.

"'Ee says has 'ow you knows confounded well wot

hails 'im. 'Ee 's got no 'ead for hewmer, sir. Better let me mash 'im, Mr. Moore. The practice hand hexercise would do us both good."

"No, Buster, we 'll have no violence. Admit Mr. Dabble with appropriate solemnity."

"Step hin 'ere, you sour-faced cockney," said Buster, throwing open the door. "Turn your noble footsies hin this direction, han don't kick the nap hoff the brussels carpet with your feet stools or Hi will lift you one in the phisomy, which his 'igh Henglish fer that ugly face o' yourn, you willain."

Chapter Eleven

TOM MOORE RECEIVES VISITS FROM TWO COBBLERS AND A CLERK

MR. DABBLE was a slender, sharp-featured young man of six-and-twenty. His face was sour and suspicious, an expression that was heightened by his wispy yellow hair that bristled up not unlike the comb on a rooster. He was long and lank, and afflicted with an overweight of good opinion as to his own merits which may have been the cause of his stooping shoulders.

After giving Buster a squelching glance, intended to reduce that impudent youth to a proper degree of humility (a result which it conspicuously failed to produce), this worthy person entered briskly, carrying on his arm a basket covered with an old cloth. Dabble believed in system, and in this instance having an order of sherry to deliver in the neighborhood took advantage of his being in the vicinity to dun the poet for his long over-due account.

Setting down the basket on the floor near the door, the clerk drew a bill from his vest pocket and advanced with it to the table at which Moore was pretending to be busily scribbling.

"Mr. Dabble, sir," announced Buster.

Moore did not look up.

"Tell Dabble to go to the devil," he remarked, absent-mindedly, continuing his writing.

"Mr. Moore, I refuse to go to the devil," exclaimed Dabble, indignantly.

"Then don't go to the devil," answered Moore, still scribbling. "Call on some other relative."

"My employer says it is high time you paid this bill," persisted the clerk, thrusting the statement of Moore's account beneath the poet's nose, as Buster quietly investigated the contents of the basket the newcomer had brought with him.

"You must n't believe all you hear, Mr. Dabble," replied Moore. "Many casual statements are grossly incorrect. Really, the aggregate amount of misinformation current these days is most appalling. Just consider it for a moment if you have never given it thought before."

"I have no time for consideration, Mr. Moore."

"If you had more consideration for time — that is *my* time — and its value, you would not be delaying the completion of this poem in this manner," Moore answered, laying down the quill with a sigh of endurance. "Sit down, Mr. Dibble."

"My name is Dabble."

"Well, it would n't bend your name if you sat down, would it, Dibble?"

"Dabble, sir, Dabble."

"Quite true, sir. I frequently do in literature, but how did you know?"

"Sir," said the clerk impressively, "time flies and time is money."

"Indeed, Mr. Dibble? Let me make a suggestion then. You should take time, build a flying machine and make money. Then you would n't have to bother me for mine."

As Dabble stood for a moment quite disconcerted by the poet's remarkable advice, Buster, with exquisite care that no noise should be made to frustrate his design, extracted two of the full bottles from the deserted basket, and with equal caution replaced them with two of the empty ones he had set out preparatory to offering them for sale in the neighborhood.

So carefully did Buster execute this manœuvre, that the attention of neither the clerk nor Moore was attracted to his performance, which was successfully repeated by the lad until only one full bottle remained in the basket, this being left deliberately for a certain purpose, not because the opportunity to purloin it had not been afforded him.

"Do you intend to pay this bill, sir?" demanded Dabble, waking up to the fact that he had been made fun of, and waxing angry accordingly.

"Certainly I intend to pay it, Mr. Dibble," said Moore impatiently.

"To-day?"

"No, I never pay bills on Tuesday."

"What day *do* you pay them on?"

"I usually liquidate all indebtedness on the twenty-ninth of February. If you will call around then I will be pleased to settle and may perhaps give you another order. Now you really must excuse me, as I am obliged to finish this sonnet without further delay."

"February is too far off," objected the clerk, not comprehending the space of time that must necessarily elapse before the date mentioned by Moore would be reached by the calendar, for this was not a leap-year.

"Well, then, pay it yourself, Mr. Dibble, if you are

not satisfied with my way of doing it. Perhaps that would be the best way, after all."

"Mr. Moore, have done with joking. This bill —"

"Hang it, Dibble, you make more noise with your beak than you do with your bill," exclaimed Moore, trying indignation for a change. "You 'll have me out of my mind, if you don't look out."

"Well, that 's evidently where our bill has been."

"Out of mind, Mr. Dibble?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then if it has no mind it is unreasonable, and I never pay unreasonable bills. Buster, the door for Mr. Dibble."

"I am not going yet, and my name is Dabble, not Dibble."

Moore waved Buster back as that pugnacious youth was about to lay violent hands on the clerk.

"Your father is responsible for your name. He is much to blame, Dibble. If I were you, I 'd sue the old man for damages."

"I see you have no intention of paying this bill, Mr. Moore," said the clerk, abandoning hope of collection.

"You must be a mind reader," observed Moore. "You could make a fortune exhibiting your gifts in public, sir. Now, my dear fellow, before you go, just to show there is no hard feeling between us personally, even if I owe your employer, have a drink with me."

"But," began Dabble.

"I 'll take no denial," said Moore, winningly. "Come, sir, you shan't refuse me. Buster, bring forth the precious liquor and we will do honor to our guest."

"I never drink a drop," expostulated the clerk, telling an outrageous lie incidentally.

"Well," said Moore, with a laugh, "I never drop a drink, so we cancel that objection. We will have a tiny wet together socially as two honest gentlemen should. We will drink health to Mrs. Dibble and all the little Dubbles."

"There is no little Dubbles, sir," answered the clerk, mollified in spite of himself by Moore's charming manner.

"What? No twins? That is an oversight, sir. Oh, well, we 'll be sanguine, Dibble, for there is no telling what may occur in the future. Accidents will happen in the best-regulated families, and I am sure yours is one of the best, so cheer up and don't despair. Buster, you devil, what is keeping you?"

"Hall ready, sir, hall ready," replied the boy, who, having extracted the cork from one of the stolen bottles, had carefully wrapped a cloth around it, so that the label would not betray his secret to the enemy while he was filling the glasses.

Moore, taking for granted that the beverage decanted by Buster was the poteen he had previously denied himself, watched Dabble eagerly as that gentleman raised his glass to his lips, expecting the usual cough and sputter to follow the first swallow of the fiery liquid. In this he was disappointed, for the clerk drank calmly and with evident enjoyment.

"What do you think of that whisky, Mr. Dabble?"

"Whisky, sir? This is sherry," answered the clerk, "and quite a respectable quality too."

"How 's that?" asked Moore, in surprise; then, sipping the contents of his own glass, he found that

his guest was quite right. Meanwhile Buster, from the concealment afforded him behind Mr. Dabble, was making frantic gesticulations to his master, finally succeeding in catching his eye.

"What ails the boy?" muttered Moore, rarely puzzled to understand how his empty cupboard could have furnished the refreshment Buster had just put before them.

"Eh?" said Mr. Dabble, sipping his sherry in a manner that gave the lie to his recent announcement of total abstinence.

"Sherry it is," said Moore. "Fault of the label, Mr. Dabble. Your best health, sir."

"It is very fair sherry, Mr. Moore, very fair," declared the clerk, condescendingly, "but pardon me if I say it is hardly up to our level of quality."

"Is that so, Mr. Dabble?"

"Yes, sir. Now I have some really superior sherry in my basket there."

"Oh, law!" exclaimed Buster in an undertone. "'Ere is where Hi takes to cover."

And he tiptoed out of the doorway unnoticed.

"You don't say so, Mr. Dabble?" replied Moore in an interested tone.

"Indeed I do, Mr. Moore. I think I have time to show you," said Dabble, rising as he spoke.

"By all means do so."

Dabble pulled his watch from his pocket as he crossed to the basket.

"Gracious!" he exclaimed. "I had no idea it was so late. I have n't a moment to spare. Good-day, sir."

"Good-day," said Moore politely, as the clerk picked

up the basket, not noticing the difference in weight in the hurry of the moment, and opening the door closed by Buster in making his escape, nodded a last good-bye to the poet before going.

Left to himself, Moore took another drink from his glass.

"Where the devil," thought he, "did Buster get that wine? That boy is certainly a wonder."

A tremendous crash was heard in the hall below. Moore ran to the door, and leaning over the banister sought to discover the cause of the racket as up the stairs came Buster, running lightly in his stockinged feet as any cat. Moore seized him by the arm.

"What happened?" he demanded.

"Mr. Dabble 'as fell downstairs, sir," replied the boy cheerfully. "His n't hit hawful. You never 'eard such langwidge. Hi 'me shocked, Hi am."

"You little devil, you tripped him up."

"'Ee can't prove it, so wot 's the hodds if Hi did?" asked Buster, not at all abashed at his master's accusation. "Hi think 'ee must 'ave fell hover Mrs. Malone, sir."

"Are you hurt, Mr. Dabble?" called Moore over the balustrade.

"No," replied Mrs. Malone, from far below. "He's not hur-ted, but he has broken all his bottles and the stairs is running over with sherry."

"I 'd like to lick up the stairs," answered the poet. "Give him my sympathy, Mrs. Malone, and tell him I send my love to the twins."

"Have you the rint, Misther Moore?"

"I 'm not dressed yet, Mrs. Malone."

"Are you going to dress to-day?"

"I am surprised at your indelicacy in asking such an immodest question of an innocent and unmarried young man," replied Moore reprovingly. "If you keep on I 'll feel it my duty to mention your behavior to Father O'Houlihan. Oh, it is shocked he would be, Mrs. Malone."

"Niver mind," answered the landlady. "You lave Father O'Houlihan to me."

"I don't know whether the good man will be safe in your hands after this morning's revelation, Mrs. Malone. He don't look over strong."

"Wait till I get hold of you, you rapscallion."

"No, I can't wait," said Moore, slamming the door as he returned to his own apartment.

"Buster!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Explain this misfortune of Mr. Dabble's."

"Ho, 'ee 'll never know, sir, habout the sherry," replied Buster, reassuringly.

"He won't?" said Moore, still in the dark. "What do you mean, lad?"

"Hi left 'im one full bottle, so hif 'ee should 'appen to fall hon 'is way downstairs hit would be hall right. Hi 've got hall 'ee 'ad with 'im hexcept that one bottle wich Hi feels has 'ow hit was a cruel shame to waste."

As the boy spoke he threw open the cupboard and exhibited his plunder neatly arranged in two rows on the middle shelf.

Moore swore gently in his astonishment and sat down.

"Buster," said he, "have you no morals?"

"No, sir, but Hi 'as the sherry."

"Well, there is no use in sending it back, I suppose. It's six more bottles to be added to the bill when I pay it."

"Yessir, this his simply hour method hof obtaining more credit, sir."

"Buster," said Moore solemnly. "You are a financier. We'll have a glass together."

. . . . . .

Promptly at four a dapper little person, who moved with such lively and mannered steps, even when walking at his slowest gait, that his general demeanor was highly suggestive of a dancing master in business hours, entered the house which was honored by the presence of Thomas Moore and his faithful servant. This individual was a cobbler named Hypocrates Slink, who hammered and sewed leather in a little store perhaps a hundred yards farther down the street than the house presided over by Mrs. Malone. He had red hair and a nose gently tinted with another shade of the same color. His eyes were small, blue, and not entirely guiltless of a squint; in fact, his chief rival in the trade was wont to describe him as a cock-eyed impostor. This, being repeated to Mr. Slink, had caused him to make remarks of a decidedly acrimonious nature in reply, and as these had in their turn been faithfully carried to the object that had drawn them forth, a bitter feud was engendered, the result being that the neighborhood was frequently provided with amusement by the verbal combats of the two cobblers, for, while physical encounters seemed pending, as yet there had none taken place.

Having knocked for admittance, Mr. Slink was duly announced and ushered in by Buster, whose manner

to one better versed in the youth's peculiarities would have seemed suspiciously courteous.

"Good-day to you, Mr. Slink," said Moore, pleasantly. "Is your health salubrious?"

"Quite werry, sir," replied the cobbler, approaching his patron with his usual mincing step.

"And have you the boots, Mr. Slink?"

"I have, sir," replied the cobbler, exhibiting a paper-wrapped bundle, nestling beneath his arm. "Here they are, sir, but the money, sir? You promised cash, sir. That is to say, sir, I intimidated as delicatesome as I could that I must have the coin, sir, before I could let you have them, sir."

"So I have been informed by my man," replied Moore. "Really, my good sir, such suspicions are unworthy of you. Believe me, it is with regret I perceive the taint of cynicism in an otherwise charming character."

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Slink. "Yes, sir. Them is just my own sentiments, but I have a large family, and one that I may say, proudly and truthfully, sir, is on the steady increase."

"My sympathy to you in your misfortune," said Moore, hastily. "Ah, England owes much of her advancement to her noble citizens. It is such men as you make possible the Orphan Asylums, for without the young and deserving what would become of such worthy institutions?"

"Sir, you take the werry words out o' my mouth. Scarcely a day passes but I says much the same thing to Matilda. You see, she being a mother and a woman—"

"The natural implication, believe me, Mr. Slink," interrupted Moore.

"Oh, quite, sir. One usually follows on the other. Matilda is apt to become downcast when she compares population with pocket-book, for as one goes up the other goes down, so I made her a solemn promise after the sixth that business should be placed on a strictly cash basis in the future."

"Ah," observed Moore, interestedly, "and did that encourage the good woman?"

"I think it must have, for our next blessing was twins, boy and girl, sir."

"Cause and effect is a most diverting study," observed Moore. "Now that you have explained the reason for your insisting upon immediate material compensation for your labor, I cease to regard such a stipulation as insulting."

"Yes, sir," replied the gratified cobbler.

"But, Mr. Slink, have you thought of the result that might ensue if too much encouragement be provided for so lofty an ambition as that which stirs your wife's existence? Twins can be endured, but, sir, think of triplets!"

"Well, sir, I holds that there is luck in odd numbers," answered Mr. Slink, quite unimpressed by the poet's argument and its obvious conclusions, "so, if you 'll let me, I shall be delighted to enleather your pedals, if I may make bold to so term your feet."

"Just as you say, Mr. Slink; but, of course, before I part with my money I naturally desire to be certain that the boots fit me."

"All right," said the cobbler, undoing his parcel. "Sit you down, Mr. Moore, and I 'll exhibit my wares."

Moore took the stool brought to him by Buster, and

the cobbler, kneeling down, proceeded with sundry pulls and pushes to inclose his foot in the new shoe.

"Easy, easy!" said Moore, clutching the bottom of the stool, to keep from being shoved off it. "You are not pushing a cart, even if you are driving a bargain, Mr. Slink."

"There you are," exclaimed the cobbler, sitting on his heels as he wiped the perspiration from his wrinkled brow. "There you are. A beautiful fit, or may I be unworthy of Matilda."

"Your merit, Mr. Slink, has already been proved if your previous statements are authentic," said Moore. "Statistics bear me out, my friend. I am quite convinced you are a splendidly matched pair."

"Well, sir, this other boot is just as good a match for the one you have on."

"Try it, Mr. Slink, try it. There is nothing like doing things thoroughly. I know Matilda and you agree with me there."

Slink obediently started to fit the other shoe, finding some little difficulty in doing so, for Moore contrived to make the operation a very difficult one, and for a purpose, as will be seen later.

"You are an artist, Mr. Slink," said Moore, approvingly. "Look at the boot, Buster. Did you ever see better?"

"Never 'as 'ow Hi remembers. Oh, Mr. Slink his a tiptopper when it comes to shoes heven if Mr. Smirk hallows 'as 'ow 'ee 's a bloomink bungler," replied Buster, winking at his master. "But, hof corse, Mr. Smirk, being a bachelor, 'ee hain't as careful as 'ee might be. 'Ee says 'ee 'as no wife to beat 'im as

hothers 'ee says 'ee knows hof in the same business 'as."

"If that baldheaded leather-spoiler means me, all I have to say is that no decent woman would consider matrimonially no such rum-soaked old ravellings as that same Smirk," replied Mr. Slink, puffing at his work. "He has no pride in his handiwork. His shoes lack all soul, spirituously speaking."

"Pride," repeated Moore, with a grimace of discomfort. "That shoe will have to be pried before I can wear it. Oh! It is tight, Mr. Slink, cursedly tight, Mr. Slink. Were you yourself quite sober when you made it?"

"Yes, sir, I was. I always am sober, sir."

"Then it is the wind that tints your proboscis that strawberry pink, is it?" said Moore. "Suppose you have a gentle breeze with me. I've a new lot of sherry just sent me by Admiral Nelson. You must try it, Mr. Slink. Just a little puff of wind? A squall more or less won't affect the color of your nose."

"I'll be delighted, sir," replied the cobbler, getting on his feet. "As I always says to Matilda —

> "A little wine now and then
> Is cheery for the soberest men."

"Ah," said Moore, "I see you are a student of the poets?"

"That verse is of my own decomposition," answered Mr. Slink proudly.

"I believe you," said Moore, suavely. "Your health, Mr. Slink, the health of Mrs. Slink, and all the little Slinkers!"

The cobbler emptied his glass and smacked his lips.

"We forgot to drink your own health, Mr. Moore. We must repair that oversight instanterly, if I may make so bold."

"I 'm flattered," replied Moore. "Buster, fill the glasses again."

"Splendid wine," remarked Mr. Slink, rather thickly for, if the truth be known, he had treated himself twice at the ale-house across the street before mounting to the attic, and this unwonted indulgence in addition to the hospitality of the poet made an aggregate amount of intoxicants quite a little more than he could comfortably contain.

"You 're a judge of liquor, Mr. Moore, a gentleman and a scholar in the bargain. I 've always told Matilda so, I assure you."

"I am delighted to hear you say so, Mr. Slink. Now if you will take this shoe that is tight back to the shop and have it stretched, I 'll pay you for the pair if the one that pinches suits as well as this I have on, when I try it on again."

"Just so, sir," replied the cobbler, cheerfully, meanwhile getting down on his knees to remove the unsatisfactory boot. "I 'll not be long, sir. You can rely on my return, sir, within the hour."

"That will be soon enough," said Moore. "Here is your paper, Mr. Slink."

"Thank you, sir," said the now thoroughly exhilarated shoemaker, wrapping up the boot, as Moore resumed the well-worn slippers he had temporarily discarded for the test of Mr. Slink's handiwork.

"Good day, Mr. Slink."

"Good day, Mr. Moore."

"Oh, my best respects to Mrs. Slink."

"Matilda will be delighted, sir," replied the cobbler, moving out into the hall with a step decidedly uncertain.

Moore gave vent to a sigh of satisfaction as the sound of feet died away upon the stairs below.

"But, sir," said Buster, inquiringly, as he shut the door, "wot use his one boot?"

Moore regarded his youthful retainer with a look of mild astonishment.

"Don't you understand, Buster?"

"Not Hi, sir."

"Well then, I'll not tell you. Demonstration is far more valuable than explanation. So just watch me, my lad. A study of Thomas Moore when hard up is a liberal education for the young and unsophisticated. You shall be educated, Buster."

"Yes, sir. Wot his it, Lord Castlereagh?"

"Gr-r-r-g-h!" remarked the bulldog, warningly, at the same time sniffing suspiciously at the crack of the door.

"Is-s-s Mister-r-r M-M-M-oore in?" demanded a husky voice, enthusiastically and persistently hyphenated by a decided stutter.

"Hit's the hother shoemaker, sir," whispered Buster, recognizing the thick utterance of the newcomer. "The one who spits on his words, sir, before 'ee lets loose hof 'em."

"Faith," said Moore, "it is a good thing the hall is dark. They must have met on the stairs. It's a wonder we escaped bloodshed, Buster."

"I s-say, is-s-s Mr. M-M-Moore at h-home?" repeated the shoemaker, with a hiccup that was plainly perceptible within the attic.

"Phew!" exclaimed Buster in an undertone, recoiling from the keyhole. "Hole Smirk his loaded hup to 'is hears. You won't need to waste hany of the Hadmiral's sherry hon 'im, sir. 'Ee 's fragrant, sir, that 's wot 'ee his, hand it hain't no bloomin' new mown 'ay wot flavors 'im, Hi tells yer."

"Admit the gentleman," said Moore, opening the windows to their widest extent. "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

"A friend in soak his more like it," murmured the boy, opening the door obediently.

The big, bald-headed, redfaced man who had egged Bekowsky on to disaster earlier in the afternoon staggered in with an oath and a hiccup so entangled on his lips that neither he nor his hosts made any effort to translate his greeting.

"Good-day, Mr. Smirk," observed Moore, pleasantly. "You are looking well, sir."

"T-t-t-hat is-s n-no ex-c-cuse f'r keeping me w-w-waiting a month in the h-h-hall," replied the intoxicated tradesman, thickly, endeavoring to look offended.

"We thought you were a publisher, my friend, and we always make them wait a little while before we admit them," said Moore. "It has a most beneficial effect upon their opinion of me as a writer. Independence is frequently accepted as indicative of personal affluence, as you doubtless know."

Mr. Smirk looked a trifle dazed, and then, abandoning his effort at comprehension, proceeded to get to his business without further delay.

"H-h-have you the m-money for the b-boots, Mr. M-M-Moore?" he inquired, holding his par-

cel behind him as though fearful that he might be robbed.

"Ah, sir," replied Moore, suavely, "money fits any hand, but my foot does n't fit every shoe. I 'll try them on if you are not too tired."

"Y-yes, s-sir," replied Smirk, with difficulty unwrapping his package.

"Your words are as slow as my rent," said Moore, sitting down.

The cobbler dropped heavily on his knees, and losing his balance, fell forward on Moore's lap almost knocking him off the stool.

"It is n't time to lie down yet," said the poet, restoring the tradesman to his equilibrium. "You forgot your prayers, sir."

Smirk succeeded in getting one of the boots on without much difficulty, but the other stuck fast in spite of the earnest endeavors of its maker.

"Is it a straightjacket you have there, Mr. Smirk?" demanded Moore. "Don't trouble to answer me. It will take too long. You will have to have that stretched, sir."

"Y-yes, s-sir," replied the cobbler, "that will f-f-fix it fine."

"Take it along, Mr. Smirk, and have it attended to immediately," directed the poet. "When I try it on again, if it 's all right, I 'll pay you for the pair. How long will it take you?"

"I 'll be b-back in l-less than an hour, Mr. M-M-Moore, and see you have your money r-ready."

"Ready money is a nice thing," assented Moore. "Good day, Mr. Smirk."

"G-g-good d-day," began the shoemaker.

"Finish it outside," suggested Moore.

"I w-w-will, s-sir," replied Smirk, and as he proceeded slowly and unsteadily downstairs, the whisky-burdened tones of the cobbler died away in a murmur and then ceased entirely.

"Observe me, Buster," said Moore, boots in hand. "These boots are made of one style. From Mr. Smirk I have procured one for my right foot; from Mr. Slink one for my left. The two together make a pair, which is the object I set out to accomplish."

"'Ooray!" shouted Buster. "Hi sees. Hi sees."

"A trifle late, Buster, a trifle late," said Moore, pulling on his recently acquired spoils.

"But, sir," said the boy, apprehensively, "they will both be back in a little while."

"Well, I 'll take pains not to be here then."

"But they 'll watch hand ketch you sooner hor later."

"That is all the good it will do them," replied Moore, cheerfully, regarding his feet with no little amount of approval.

"Hi knows, sir, but you never breaks your word, sir, hand you promised to pay —"

"*When* did I say I 'd pay, Buster?"

"When you tried on the other boot, sir."

"Well, that is a simple matter, lad. I *won't* try the other boot on."

"Won't yer?"

"Not I, and they will have a nice easy time making me against my will."

"Hi sees, Mr. Moore," cried the boy, delighted at the discovery of a means of discomfiting the cobbler without breaking a promise.

Moore sighed.

"Ah, Buster," he said sadly, "when luck comes we will pay all these men. Till then they will have to give us credit, and if they won't give it, we will take it, but for every penny I owe them now, I 'll pay them two when I can afford to settle. I can do without wine, but without boots I 'd not earn the coin to pay any of my debts. I don't like such trickery, heaven knows, but I must get on. I must get on."

"Hif they were n't crazy fools, they 'd be glad to trust us," assented Buster. "We 'll pay 'em when McDermot brings hout our book hof poems."

"That reminds me," said Moore, "it must be almost time for me to hear from that same gentleman."

"Yessir. Say, does Hi get a hautograph copy?"

"You do, Buster," replied Moore, smiling. "No one deserves it more than you, I am sure."

"A hautograph copy," repeated Buster, delightedly. "My, but that will be fine. Hand I wants yer to write your name hin the front of it?"

"Don't you know what an autograph copy is, Buster?" asked Moore, his eyes twinkling.

"That Hi does," said the boy, confidently. "Hit 's one with gilt hedges hall around it. Hi knows."

Chapter Twelve

IN WHICH THE POET WARBLES TO MRS. MALONE

RAT-tat-tat!

"Are you dressed, Mister Moore?" asked Mrs. Malone, her ear against the crack of the door.

Moore winked at Buster and motioned him to admit the landlady, who entered with her accustomed independence of carriage, apparently expecting and prepared for contention.

"Ah, ha," said she, triumphantly. "You did n't thrick me this time, Tom Moore."

"On the contrary, I have been patiently waiting for your coming, Mrs. Malone," replied the poet, politely.

The landlady looked incredulous.

"Where is the rint?" she inquired, belligerently.

"Here in my dressing gown," answered Moore, exhibiting a long tear in the garment mentioned. "A big rip it is, too. Have you your needle handy?"

"I wants no fooling, Misther Thomas Moore," declared Mrs. Malone, drawing her bushy brows low in a ferocious frown.

"Were you ever in love, Mrs. Malone?"

"Thot is none of your business."

"You forget your husband was my first instructor," said Moore, reproachfully.

"Well, I 'll be your last teacher, and I 'll give you instructions in how to get up and get out wid your pile o' kit, bag and baggage, unless I gets me rint."

"You are Irish, Mrs. Malone."

"Niver mind thot, sorr."

"Sure, I don't mind, if you don't," replied Moore, "and if Ireland don't object there will be no discussion on that point at all."

"Whot are yez going to do? Thot 's whot I wants to know, Mr. Moore? Is it rint or run, me fine bucko?"

"Won't you sit down, Mrs. Malone?"

"I 'll not sit down, I 'll stand up."

"Well, will you stand up till you get the rent, Mrs. Malone?"

"I 'll sit down," replied the landlady, suiting the action to the words so vigorously that the attic rattled.

"Do you know, Mrs. Malone, I 've written you a song?"

"I wants no song. I have no notes in me voice."

"Faith," said Moore, with a chuckle, "we are alike then, for I 've none in my pocket."

"I wants me rint."

"Be easy, Mrs. Malone," said Moore, in a conciliatory tone and forthwith broke into song:

"Oh, the days are gone when beauty bright
My heart's chain wove —"

"Where is the rint?" interrupted the irate landlady, but Moore continued his singing, at the same time helping himself to a seat on the table beside her.

"When all my dreams by day or night
Were love, still love —"

"The rint is no dream," exclaimed Mrs. Malone, "and by gorry, I 'll have it, me canary-bird."

"New hopes may bloom,
And days may come
Of milder, calmer beam —"

"Not till I have ivery penny due me," asserted Mrs. Malone, turning a deaf ear to the pathos and sentiment with which the poet's beautiful voice was investing the simple words of the song.

"But there 's nothing half so sweet in life
As Love's young dream —"

"I 'd prefer the rint a t'ousand times," observed Mrs. Malone, quite unaffected.

"No, there 's nothing half so sweet in life
As Love's young dream."

As the words of the song died away in a sigh of sentimental melody, Moore leaned forward and touched the old woman on the shoulder, hoping that he had struck some responsive chord of memory in her recollections of long-departed youth, but he was doomed to disappointment, for she smote the table with one calloused fist and called upon the saints to witness and sustain her resolve to accept nothing but the whole amount of the money due her.

Nothing daunted, Moore slipped off the table and standing behind his determined creditor began another verse, throwing even more feeling into his voice as he proceeded:

"No, — that hallowed form is ne'er forgot
Which first love traced —"

"THERE'S NOTHING HALF SO SWEFT IN LIFE AS LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM."

"I 'll have that rint, Tom Moore, song or no song," interrupted Mrs. Malone, but her tone was not quite so quarrelsome as before, and Moore from this drew encouragement that lent double sympathy to his music as he continued:

"Still it lingering haunts the greenest spot
On memory's waste—"

"I wants me rint," remarked Mrs. Malone, but her voice had lost its assertive defiance.

"'T was odor fled
As soon as shed—"

"I 'll have me rint, Tom Moore," said the landlady plaintively.

"'T was morning's wingéd dream;
'T was a light that ne'er can shine again,
On life's dull stream—"

An audible sniff came from beneath the frill of Mrs. Malone's cap and she cleared her throat noisily. Moore leaned over her and tenderly and slowly breathed forth the last words of his song, the mournful cadences stealing from his lips sweet and low and laden with tears, supremely touching in their plaintive harmony, for he sang as though it was to the hopeless love that filled his heart's innermost recess that he now gave utterance.

"No, there 's *nothing* half so sweet in life
As Love's young dream."

The last words died away, and for a moment the old attic was silent. Then Mrs. Malone rose from her seat with a stifled sob, and, wiping her eyes, started toward the door.

"And the rent, Mrs. Malone?" asked Moore, timidly.

"You — you rapscallion," she said, brokenly, "to make an old woman like me cry. Ah, bless you, Tom Moore, for it 's the old days you 've brought back to me."

"But the rent?"

"May your voice never grow less, Tom Moore. You — You — !"

"Well, Mrs. Malone?"

"You have me rint Satherday or there 'll be throuble."

And, blowing her nose vigorously, the relenting landlady left the attic to its inhabitants.

"'O-o-ray! 'O-o-ray!" shouted Buster in a hoarse whisper, seizing Lord Castlereagh by the front paws and dancing around in a circle in his delight. "Till Saturday, till Saturday! 'O-oray! 'O-oray!"

"Buster, from now on, we can never complain of these apartments as expensive," said Moore, fanning himself by the window.

"No, sir? Why not?" asked Buster.

"Because I got them for a song," replied the poet. "A cursed bad joke, Buster, even if I did make it myself."

Chapter Thirteen

TOM MOORE HAS A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT AND AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

MRS. Malone opened the door suddenly, accompanying this action with a vigorous gesture intended to represent an apology for the liberty she took in omitting the knock. By this it can be easily seen that under Buster's tuition the manners of the landlady were improving.

"A gentleman to see you, Misther Moore."

"Show the gentleman in, Mrs. Malone," said the poet, adding in an undertone to Buster, "This must be a reception we are giving. We have joined society without knowing it, lad."

"This way, sorr," announced Mrs. Malone, with an elephantine duck, this being the best imitation nature permitted her to give of a courtesy.

Immediately a little, square-shaped man with an expressionless face from which protruded two beady eyes in much the same manner that raisins brighten and decorate the exterior surface of a plum-pudding, entered, striding as pompously as though his height were considerably over six feet instead of but a trifle under five. His face was clean shaven and consistently grave and solemn down to the lower lip, where his chin made a sudden and undignified attempt to obtain com-

plete concealment in the folds of his neckcloth. However, all in all, he was a neat little man, though far from a beauty.

"Er — er — ahem," he began with a little cough, meanwhile looking back and forth from Moore to Buster as Mrs. Malone waddled out of the attic, "*which* is Mr. Thomas Moore?"

"I am, sir," replied the poet, taking no notice of the new-comer's intentional rudeness. "What do you wish with me?"

"I—er—er—ahem—come from Mr. McDermot, the publisher. My name is Gannon."

"Indeed?" cried Moore. "Won't you have a chair, Mr. Gannon?"

"I will, thank you," replied the clerk, for such he was, seating himself with much dignity, a performance given a humorous tinge by the unsuccessful attempt he made to cross his fat little legs. "I have called at Mr. McDermot's request to see you about your poems."

"You are more than welcome, I am sure," replied Moore.

"Mr. McDermot has read the manuscript volume you submitted, and takes great pleasure in saying he has never read anything better; *great* pleasure."

Moore gave a sigh of relief and grew quite light-headed with delight. Here was real appreciation. Genius was about to be recognized at last. Ugly, ill-tempered, little Gannon became in the poet's eyes suddenly invested with the beautiful characteristics and perfect exterior of a cherub, a little over-grown and shapeless, perhaps, but nevertheless cherubic. He wondered how he could for the moment have so greatly disliked this herald of prosperity.

"Mr. Gannon, you are thirsty, I know," stammered Moore. "You must be after such a walk. I insist that you drink with me, sir. What shall it be?"

"Since you insist I 'll try a little port," said the clerk, obligingly.

"Unfortunately," replied the poet, "that is one thing I have n't in my possession. I'm like a loaded ship, sir, just out of port. But I 'll give you something better."

"Will you?"

"I 've the finest drink in the world in that cupboard, sir. One that will make life seem like a dream of blue sky and roses to you."

"Er — er — ahem, — I am a *married* man," observed Mr. Gannon, doubtfully.

"This will enable you to forget that," said Moore in a reassuring tone.

"I hope not," replied Gannon, suddenly waxing confidential. "The only cloud in my domestic horizon was caused by just such a slip of memory. What a recollection women have for such lapses."

"For theirs or for yours, Mr. Gannon?"

"For mine, Mr. Moore, for mine," hastily replied the clerk. "Ah, women — er — er — ahem — are angels, sir, angels."

"No doubt," said Moore, pleasantly, as he poured out the whisky, "of one kind or *another*. This, sir, is the dew of heaven. You 'll never beat this for tipple, Mr. Gannon. When I place this before you I show you the greatest compliment in my power. Believe me, it is most precious, dear sir, for it is the essence of Ireland. Each drop a tinted diamond. Your health, Mr. Gannon."

"Thank you, Mr. Moore, thank you," replied the

clerk in a flattered tone, raising his glass to his mouth. But the first swallow of the fiery liquid sent him into such a paroxysm of coughing that Moore felt compelled to slap him on the back hastily.

"That 's the way to drink such whisky," said the poet, approvingly. "It makes it last longer."

"Er — er — ahem," replied the clerk, taking advantage of Moore's own imbibing to empty the contents of his glass over his shoulder unperceived by his host. Buster, being at this particular moment just behind the little clerk, received the whisky full in the face, and feeling compelled on his master's account to resist the belligerent impulse which demanded he should obtain immediate satisfaction from the cause of his discomfiture, he sought with a smothered oath the seclusion of the stairs, an exile into which he was immediately followed by the bulldog.

"What ails the lad?" asked Moore in astonishment. "I wonder if he is n't well?"

"Ahem — er — Mr. Moore," began the clerk in a businesslike tone, "permit me to deliver to you the message of my employer. I really am pressed for time, sir."

"Go ahead," said Moore, seating himself on the opposite side of the table near which his guest was sitting. "You may command me, Mr. Gannon."

"Mr. — er — er — McDermot — ahem — wishes me to inform you that your poetry is delightful. The language is beautiful."

"Yes?" said Moore, interrogatively, now in the seventh heaven of delight. "Really, Mr. Gannon?"

"Each metaphor he declares is as delicate as it is charming."

"Yes?"

"Your rhymes are perfect, Mr. Moore."

"Yes?"

"In fact Mr. McDermot wishes me to assure you that the highest praise can be lavished on your work, Mr. Moore, the highest praise."

"He is too kind, Mr. Gannon, he is too kind," cried the poet, rising in his excitement.

"He was delighted with your book, but —"

Mr. Gannon paused, and looked solemn.

"But what?" asked Moore, eagerly.

"He cannot publish it."

Moore stood looking stupidly at the little clerk for a moment quite dazed.

"Can't publish it?" he repeated slowly. "Can't publish it! Why not, sir?"

"Your work is most worthy," answered Mr. Gannon, "but *who* are *you?*"

"I don't — quite — know," faltered Moore, stunned by the sudden casting down of his so recently raised hopes.

"Ahem — er — er — nor does any one else," continued the clerk, pitilessly. "Mr. McDermot bade me say that to obtain success at the present time a book must be dedicated to some great figure of fashion."

"But I know none, sir," replied the disconsolate poet, sinking limply back on his stool. "I know none, sir."

"Just so, — er — er — ahem, — Mr. Moore," said Mr. Gannon, gravely. "You know none; none knows you, so here is your poetry."

As he spoke, he drew a bundle of manuscript from

his coat-tail pocket and tossed it contemptuously upon the table.

"Good day, sir, good day, er — er — ahem, — Mr. Moore."

And swelling out his chest with the importance properly attached to the person of the bearer of bad news, little Mr. Gannon sauntered leisurely out of the attic.

For a moment Moore sat motionless and dumb, striving to comprehend that the sudden downfall of his hopes was real. So quickly had he found himself robbed of the triumph which seemed almost in his grasp that the events of the last few moments were temporarily blurred and blotted in his mind as the fanciful weavings of a slumbering brain often are when consciousness is rudely restored to the sleeper and memory seeks to recall the dream.

"Done again," he murmured, softly. "*Done again.*"

Suddenly a great sob shook his frame, but he manfully choked back the others which would have followed it.

"My courage is gone at last," he whispered, as though he were not alone. "I 'm beaten — I 'm beaten. Oh, it is bitter. All my bright hopes were conjured up but to fade. A glimpse of Paradise shown to me, and then this attic again. Ah, Bessie, Bessie, my heart is broken this day."

For a second he seemed as though about to break down completely, but, controlling himself with a great effort, he dashed the tears from his eyes with the back of his hand. Then as he turned, his eye fell upon the manuscript lying on the table where it had been thrown by the careless hand of Mr. Gannon.

"You are there, are you?" he cried, seizing it

roughly. "You tempted me from beautiful Ireland — you lured me here to this heartless, cruel London, with a thousand sweet promises of hope and love and fame. You 've tricked me. You brought me here to starve — to die — to fail. Then, damn you, I 'm through with you forever."

He hurled the written book to the floor and groped his way to the window, blinded with the tears he would not shed. The golden and salmon hued glory of the sunset, painting the spires and house tops with a thousand shades of flame, fell full upon his hopeless head, and conscious of the horrible mockery of such a halo at a time when only darkness and despair seemed to surround his existence, the poor fellow buried his face in his arms on the window-sill and sobbed like a beaten child.

After a while, when the final bitterness of his grief and disappointment had passed he left the window. As he crossed the room his eye fell upon the rejected poems, which lay on the floor bathed in the crimson and yellow riot of a sunbeam. He stood for a moment as though transfixed, then as his heart filled with a sudden revulsion of feeling he knelt and clasped the manuscript to his breast with a little cry.

"No, no," he murmured brokenly, "I did n't mean it, I did n't mean it, for *such* as you are you 're *all* I have."

When Buster opened the door a few moments later he found his master sitting in his favorite arm-chair in front of the fireplace in which flickered a tiny fire, lighted for the sake of its cheering influence as the chill of fall was still at least a month away.

"Well, sir?" asked the lad, hopefully. "Did he take 'em?"

"No, Buster, he came to bring them back," replied Moore, quite calmly. Buster made a remark as expressive as it was profane, which is saying much.

"Well, blow 'is hugly face!" he cried, in righteous indignation. "Hall that fuss hand then 'ands 'em back?"

"He did, Buster."

"Oh, Hi wishes Hi 'ad a knowed it. Dabble's tumble would n't 'ave been a circumstance to the 'eader that little pot-bellied cove would 'ave tooken. Hi say, Mr. Moore, will you call me 'Pride' after this?"

"Why?" asked Moore, more cheerfully.

"Because 'as 'ow Hi goes before a fall hand returns hafter it. Dabble will swear to that, sir. Aw, don't let a measly publishing cove cast you down, sir. W'y hall we 'as got to do is to cut McDermot dead when we meets 'im on Pall Mall. That 'll ruin 'im socially."

"You are a plucky little devil, Buster."

"Yessir," replied the boy, sagely. "You see, Hi hain't got no gal to worry me, sir."

"Ah, my lad," said Moore, nodding his head with a sigh, "that makes a world of difference after all."

"There is some one hat the door, sir," said Buster. "Shall Hi tell 'im you 're hout?"

"No, lad, I 'll be glad of company. Bid him enter."

Buster obediently opened the door and a tall gentleman, magnificently dressed, stepped over the threshold.

"Is this the residence of Mr. Thomas Moore?" he asked, removing his hat politely.

At the sound of the new-comer's voice Moore started to his feet.

"It is, sir," he answered, advancing a step or two.

"Oh, how are you, Mr. Moore? You remember me?"

"Lord Brooking; Sir Percival's friend," said Moore coldly. "I've not forgotten you."

And he paid no attention to his lordship's outstretched hand.

Brooking seemed a trifle disconcerted at the coolness of his reception, but, recovering himself, he continued winningly:

"You wrong me, sir. My intimacy with the gentleman you named has declined to a mere acquaintance."

"You are to be congratulated, Lord Brooking," replied Moore more cordially. "Won't you sit down?"

Then, as the young nobleman was relieved of his cloak and hat by Buster, the poet went on:

"I believed your lordship to be abroad."

"It is my custom to pass six months yearly upon the Continent," answered Brooking, settling back at his ease in the old arm-chair to which his host had waved him. "To this, doubtless, your impression is due. As it is, I only returned from there two days ago, so you see, Mr. Moore, you are one of the first of my friends to receive a call from me."

"I am honored," replied Moore, politely, sitting down on the other side of the fireplace.

"No doubt you are wondering what has brought me to see you?"

"I can't deny a slight curiosity, my lord," admitted Moore, smiling back at the young nobleman, whose charming manner was winning his confidence in spite of his previous suspicions.

"A few, sir," he remarked grimly.

"But why are they not published?" demanded Lord Brooking, scanning various poems through his eyeglasses. "They seem of uniform excellence."

"They are refused because I have no patron in the world of fashion to accept the dedication. McDermot, the great publisher, told me so himself."

"Indeed?" remarked his lordship, meditatively. "Hum!"

"Ah, if your lordship would permit me?" began Moore, eagerly.

"I 'll do better than that," interrupted Brooking. "I 'll bring your work to the attention of the Prince himself."

"The Prince?" cried Moore, dazzled at the mere idea.

"Yes, Mr. Moore, the Prince. Wales, in spite of his many faults, is a curst good fellow, and quite a judge of poetry. He shall read specimens of your skill. Fortunately Mrs. FitzHerbert, who still enjoys his Highness's favor, is mightily at odds with Sir Percival. Moreover, she was greatly pleased with the Rose poem you favored her with. I 'll get her to exert her influence with Wales. Egad, Mr. Moore, we 'll do our best for you."

"How can I thank you?" faltered Moore, hope welling up in his heart once more.

Brooking rose from his chair.

"You can repay me easily," he answered, placing his hand upon his protégé's shoulder. "Marry sweet Mistress Bessie and then keep her from Sir Percival. The happiness your wedded life should bring you both will amply reward me for any effort I may make in

your behalf. If the Prince permits me to dedicate your book to him the publishers will fight for the privilege of printing it and your fortune is made, Tom Moore."

"But we have quarrelled," said Moore, hopelessly.

"Capital!" cried his lordship. "No woman tiffs with a man to whom she is indifferent. It is the sex's sweet perversity. Then, again, Tom Moore famous, for you 'll never be more than 'Tom' if success is yours — the public loves a familiar diminutive, sir — will be a different Moore from Thomas Moore unknown."

"Ah, sir, you put new courage in my heart," said Moore, catching the young nobleman's infectious enthusiasm.

"I 'll put money in your purse, which is even better, lad," replied Brooking, plunging his hand in his pocket, from which he drew it forth filled with coins of various denominations. "Write me a sonnet to send to my lady love."

"I 'll do it gladly," said Moore, seating himself at the table and with feverish haste drawing towards him pen and paper. "Is the lady blonde or brunette?"

Lord Brooking hesitated for a moment.

"Curst if I know," thought he, "since I have never laid eyes on her."

Then he continued, addressing Moore:

"Brunette, dark hair and blue eyes, and a devilishly sweet and mischievous mouth."

"Very well, sir," replied Moore, dipping his pen in the ink.

"One second, Mr. Moore. Here are five sovereigns in advance."

His lordship dropped the coins upon the table as Moore looked up at him, gratitude dumbing his tongue for the moment.

"Finish the verses at your leisure," continued Brooking. "I am in no hurry for them."

"God bless you, sir," stammered Moore, finding speech at last. "You have brought new life and hope to me this day. I 'll never forget your generosity."

"Tut, tut," said his lordship, hastily. "Never mind thanking me. If all goes well you are to get married and be happy if you wish to please me."

"I promise I 'll do my best," replied the poet, smiling more cheerfully than in days.

"My hat and cloak, boy," said Brooking. "I 'll off to Carlton House, where I am expected by Wales even now."

"I can hardly believe I am the same man, my lord," said Moore. "You have changed me completely, sir."

"You 'll hear from me soon, Tom," said Brooking, hat in hand, as he crossed to the door. "Be of good cheer, my lad, for if Wales will have none of it, I 'll accept the dedication, and I flatter myself that will be enough to insure publication for you. Good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye, my lord," answered Moore, closing the door behind his benefactor with almost reverential care.

"Mr. Moore," said Buster.

"Yes, my lad."

"Was that Lord Brooking?"

"Yes, Buster. Why do you ask?"

"Coz Hi thought as 'ow he was a bloomin' hangel," said Buster.

"Ah, lad, I 'm not sure that you are not right," answered Moore, and there was no laughter in his voice.

Chapter Fourteen

SIR PERCIVAL LOVELACE IS FAVORED BY FORTUNE

MOORE lost no time before setting out to make a little payment on account to all of his creditors residing in the neighborhood, so Buster, left to his own devices, extended a broomstick towards Lord Castlereagh in a manner tempting in the extreme. Being of a congenial and obliging disposition, the bulldog secured a firm grip and then endeavored to wrest it from his master's grasp. A rough and tumble tug-of-war ensued, the finish being an aerial performance by Lord Castlereagh, who made a flying trip around Buster as that worthy youth, exerting his muscle to the utmost, swung stick, dog and all in a circle clear of the floor. Having exhausted himself without accomplishing the release of the stick from the bulldog's jaws, Buster had a brilliant inspiration and outraged precedent by washing his face and hands, it being his custom to perform ablutions only on arising in the morning unless detected and otherwise admonished by his master. Before he had finished drying himself a warning growl from his four-legged playfellow gave notice that some one was approaching.

Buster opened the door in answer to a loud knock and found himself confronted by two elegantly attired

gentlemen, who willingly entered the room in response to his hospitable greeting.

"Hullo," said Sir Percival, coolly eying Buster through his glass with an amused smile. "Who are you?"

Buster was distinctly pleased with the baronet. Sir Percival's stalwart form was clad in the latest fashion, which set off his handsome person to great advantage, but in spite of his distinguished appearance, his manner in addressing the boy was so genuinely affable and good-natured that it placed them in sympathy at once. Where Buster liked he was prone to admire eventually; when he both liked and admired at first sight he became like clay in the potter's hands.

"Who am Hi, sir?" repeated he, "Why Hi 'me the Reverend Doctor Buster of Hall Souls's Chapel."

"Indeed?" observed Sir Percival. "Delighted to make your acquaintance, Doctor."

"We want none of your slack," growled the baronet's companion.

"Tut!" said Sir Percival, "let the boy have his joke. Is Mr. Moore at home?"

"No, sir," replied Buster, giving a hard look at Farrell, for Sir Percival's companion was none other. "'Ee's never 'ome at such times, sir."

"What times?" demanded Farrell, gruffly.

"Times wen 'ee is hout," replied the boy, delighted at having entrapped the object of his dislike, for he was as much displeased with the young man as he was favorably impressed with his more amiable companion. Sir Percival laughed gently at his companion's discomfiture.

"I am an old friend of Mr. Moore," he said to Buster. "May I wait till he returns?"

"Yessir," replied Buster. "You can make yourself comfortibble in my habsence. I ham about to give his lordship a breather."

"His lordship?" echoed Sir Percival. "May I ask whom you so designate?"

"Certingly. Come 'ere, Pupsy."

The bulldog gambolled across the room to the boy, and standing up on his hind legs playfully attempted to bite off one of his trouser buttons.

"Sich manners, hand hin front o' comp'ny too," said Buster, chidingly. "Down, sir. Hallow me to hintroduce Lord Castlereagh, the champeen fighter of the neighborhood. Say 'ow-dy-do, Pupsy."

Lord Castlereagh obediently threw up his great head and barked cheerfully in welcome. This done, he sat down on his haunches and extended his paw, which the baronet shook heartily.

"Who named the dog?" demanded Sir Percival, helping himself to a seat on the stool nearest him.

"I hasked Mr. Moore to suggest a suitable cognomy, hand that 's wot 'ee chose. 'Ee hallows has 'ow hit was wonderously happropriate, sir."

"I quite agree with your master," replied the baronet. "You said you were going out. Pray do not let me detain you."

"Hall right, sir," said Buster, taking his cap from its nail behind the door. "Mr. Moore will return from 'is drive in 'Yde Park in 'arf an hour. Hi won't be very long. Come hon, Pupsy."

Opening the door he hurried along the hall and down the stairs with Lord Castlereagh yelping delight-

edly in headlong pursuit as Sir Percival rose from his seat and strolled carelessly around the attic, humming softly to himself as he prosecuted his investigation. Meanwhile Farrell, seated in Moore's arm-chair, preserved a gloomy silence.

"So," said the baronet, disdainfully, "this is the abode of genius? Upon my word, as bare and unattractive a kennel as I have ever explored."

"You dragged me here against my will, Sir Percival," responded Farrell, uneasily. "When you have satisfied your curiosity let us go. I have no wish to encounter Moore."

"Tut," said Sir Percival, reprovingly, "there is no necessity for our haste, we saw the worthy gentleman leave here, Terence. Walking at the rate at which he started he must be half way to Pall Mall by this time."

"If he does not turn back," objected Farrell. "You can't be sure how long he intended to continue in that direction, Sir Percival."

"That can hardly be considered as a disadvantage," responded the baronet, airily, "since it adds a pleasant tinge of risk to our adventure which otherwise could not be termed hazardous, though what difference discovery would make I really fail to see."

"That is all very well for you," said Farrell, crossly, "but I want no more such beatings as he gave me in Ireland. I was in bed a week."

"You were suitably recompensed for your discomfort, Terence. Thanks to you, Bessie and her father accepted my proposition to come to London, turning a deaf ear to the impassioned explanations of the worthy but misguided Thomas."

"Oh, I 'm smart enough to accomplish the wishes

of other people," replied Farrell, bitterly, "but I cannot seem to materially advance my own fortunes."

"Yet, I see little reason for your dissatisfaction. Finding myself in need of such a clever brain in London I brought you here ostensibly to read law. You have the benefit of my popularity in the social world. Surely for a young and unknown Irishman to be comparatively intimate with the Prince's own set is an honor? You don't know when you are well off, my young misanthrope."

"That is as it may be," said Farrell, not at all impressed by his patron's eulogy of the advantage afforded him by his present situation.

"But," said Sir Percival knowingly, "think what an education for a young and ambitious beau a close and personal study of George Brummell must of necessity be. By the way he spoke very highly of you at Sam Rogers's house only yesternight."

"Did he?" asked Farrell, eagerly. "May I ask you to repeat his words, Sir Percival?"

"To be sure, my boy," said the elder man, genially. "Let me see. If I recollect correctly, his exact words were, 'Young Farrell possesses great sartorial possibilities now in a state of gradual but progressive development, his innate refinement of taste being at the present time slightly obscured and handicapped by a provincial anarchism of selection due to youth's inevitable cheerfulness in the choice of color, and rather crude harmonizing of shade.' There is a tribute for you, Terence."

Farrell flushed with pleasure. Secretly ambitious to outshine even the great leader of fashion himself, he found his aspirations seriously interfered with by the

limited income allowed him by his patron. It must not be thought, however, that Sir Percival was niggardly in his treatment of Farrell. In truth he was far more generous than ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have been under the same circumstances, but it could hardly be expected that the allowance given even by a free-handed patron to a clever protégé would suffice to dethrone such an all-powerful monarch of society as at this time was George Brummell, familiarly known in the circle he graced as the Beau. Nevertheless the handsome face and tasteful costumes of the young Irishman had begun to attract some little attention in London society, a circumstance that filled his heart with more than ordinary satisfaction, for Farrell was clear-headed enough to see that the vogue of Brummell, who was almost as renowned for wit and impertinent frankness as for dress, even in his association with Royalty itself, must sooner or later come to an end when by some characteristically insolent jest he should lose the favor of the Prince of Wales, now his close friend and patron. Some years later this very disaster apprehended by Farrell occurred, and when the impoverished and heartbroken Brummell was starving in a mean garret in Calais, it was the brilliant young Irishman, his pretensions now supported by the vast wealth of the ugly old widow whom he had meanwhile married, who reigned as first fop and dandy of the United Kingdom, until the summer Sunday morning came on which he went bravely to his death for slapping the face of Sir Dudley Brilbanke, who had made a slighting remark on beaus in general and Brummell in particular, which the successor to the unfortunate man then in exile felt bound to resent.

In the meantime Sir Percival had been poking about on the table which was still littered with the manuscripts thrown upon it during Moore's interview with Lord Brooking.

"To Bessie!" murmured the baronet in an amused tone. "Our rhymer wastes a vast number of sheets in that young lady's name, — 'The Meeting of the Waters,' 'She is Far from the Land,' 'Oft in the Stilly Night,' 'Love's Young Dream.' Will these ever see print, I wonder?"

"On that I 'll stake my life, Sir Percival," responded Farrell. "Though I dislike Tom Moore with all my heart, I know he is a genius in his line. If he will only keep his courage in the face of disappointment there is no man who will achieve more success in the writing of verses, I feel certain."

"Dear me," said Sir Percival, taking snuff, "if such is really the truth, I 'll have to interest myself in his affairs again. Hullo, what is this?"

As he spoke, the baronet drew from the heap of manuscripts the verses satirizing the Prince of Wales written and left in Moore's keeping by Mr. Dyke, which the poet had accidentally taken from the drawer when he flung his armful of rejected poems on the table before Lord Brooking.

Sir Percival scanned the verses, his dubious expression changing to one of great delight as he read on, until as he finished he laughed aloud.

"What is it pleases you, Sir Percival?"

"Egad, Terence, I 've happened on a treasure. A satire on the Prince. Gad, he cooks Wales to a cinder. Listen, Terence.

"'THE BRAIN OF ROYALTY.

"It is of scraps and fragments built,
Borrowed alike from Fools and Wits,—
His mind is like a patchwork quilt
Made up of motley, cast-off bits.
Poor Prince! And how else could it be,
His notions all at random caught,
His mind a mental fricassee
Made up of odds and ends of thought.'

"And so on for several more verses. The Regent has n't had such a toasting in many a day. I swear I 'll have this published immediately."

"Ah," said Farrell, "and why, sir?"

"'T will ruin Moore," replied the baronet, regarding the other in surprise.

Farrell surveyed the attic with a contemptuous stare before answering.

"Surely, Sir Percival, this shabby hole is not indicative of either success or affluence," said he slowly. "One does not dig into the earth to crush a worm under foot."

"You speak in riddles, Terence," observed Sir Percival, pleasantly puzzled.

"I 'll make my meaning plain, sir. Tom Moore does not annoy you now. Wait till he succeeds, if he ever does so, before you publish that poem. The time to spoil his career is when he has accomplished something and is about to climb higher. He is starving here."

"Stab me, if you are not right, Terence," exclaimed the baronet, approvingly. "I will keep this bit of humor in reserve, and you shall be witness that I found it fresh from Moore's pen upon his table."

"Willingly," said Farrell. "Meanwhile, continue your pursuit of Mistress Dyke. Are you making progress there?"

"As yet I 've gained no ground at all so far as I can see," replied Sir Percival in a discontented tone. "True, I have apparently won her trust and friendship, but that is because my behavior has been above criticism. No young curate could be more circumspect and exemplary than I have been. To tell the truth, Terence, I am cursed weary of being respectable."

"I can understand how irksome such restraint must be to you, Sir Percival," said Farrell, carelessly, "but you must play your own hand. I have helped you all I can in the securing of cards. My trick in the schoolhouse ruined Moore in the girl's estimation, thus clearing the way for your approach."

"Quite so," observed Sir Percival, cordially, "and since he is powerless to thwart me I can take my own time about the chase."

"Speaking of time, Sir Percival," said Farrell, rising to his feet, "we can't linger here much longer. Come, let us go."

"Tut, Terence," said the baronet, disapprovingly, "how nervous you are."

At this moment Moore opened the door and, striding into the room, gave an exclamation of surprise as he recognized his visitors.

"Mr. Moore, as I live," said Sir Percival, gently. "Sir, we have been waiting for you."

"What do you want here, Sir Percival?" demanded Moore, gruffly, glaring at Farrell, who was manifestly ill at ease.

"I thought I 'd look you up for old times' sake,"

replied the baronet, a sneer breaking through his smile for once. "Mr. Farrell came at my request."

Moore stepped to the door and opened it.

"Then he will leave at mine," he said, sharply. "Get along, Terence, before I do you an injury."

Farrell did not hesitate. Waving his hat in farewell to Sir Percival, he walked quickly out of the attic and started downstairs as Moore slammed the door loudly after him.

Sir Percival laughed good naturedly, and rose to his feet as Moore returned from the doorway.

"I called, Mr. Moore, to say that it has reached my ears that you are in want. Is this true?"

"I would want a long time before I would ask you for anything but your absence," replied Moore, hotly.

"If you desire to return to Ireland, I will be pleased to pay your way," continued the baronet, suavely.

"If you will go to the devil I will be pleased to assist in your departure, Sir Percival. Hurry, or I may do it now."

"You are not polite, sir."

"My politeness would be wasted upon such as you," answered Moore.

"That is a point that might be argued," observed Sir Percival in his most genial manner. "Am I to regard your answer as final, Mr. Moore?"

"Quite final. Now be so kind as to go."

"If you desire it, with pleasure."

Moore opened the door that Sir Percival might pass out and found himself face to face with Bessie Dyke, who had paused on the threshold preparatory to knocking.

"You, Bessie?" he stammered, for the moment completely confused.

Bessie was not at all embarrassed until, on entering, her eye fell on Sir Percival. Then she blushed slightly, but after a momentary hesitation turned to Moore and said:

"I thought my father was here, or I should not have ventured up."

"He was here a while ago and I expect him to return any moment," answered Moore, eagerly taking his cue from Bessie.

"A note came to the house for him marked 'Immediate,'" continued the girl, fibbing adroitly, "so I thought best to follow him here."

"Won't you wait for him?" asked Moore, pushing forward the arm-chair.

"I fancy," said Sir Percival, "I fancy Mistress Dyke will not care to remain here since her father is absent."

"Why not?" demanded Moore, angrily.

"This is scarcely the place nor the company for a lady to remain in," replied the baronet.

"When you go, Sir Percival," said Moore, more calmly, "the only objectionable feature will be removed."

Sir Percival did not deign to reply to this rudeness, but, stepping towards the girl, extended his arm in mute invitation. Mistress Dyke, however, had plans of her own, and was not to be thus led away.

"I thank you, Sir Percival," said she, "but I shall wait for my father."

Sir Percival raised his eyebrows disapprovingly, but was too wise to insist further, so took his departure

with a courtly bow to the girl, and a sneering smile for Moore, who, quite unruffled, lighted an extra pair of candles in honor of his visitor.

As the sound of the baronet's steps died away in the hall Bessie gave a sigh of relief and sank down in the chair. Moore hesitated, then taking courage came to her side.

"Ah, Bessie," he said, softly. "I 've been starving for a sight of you. It is like the old times to see you again."

"But," said the girl in a chilly tone, "the old times are passed and done with. Nothing is as it was."

"You are wrong, Bessie," said Moore, gently. "My heart is the same."

Bessie rose from the chair and drew her shawl closer about her shoulders.

"Then it belongs to Winnie Farrell," she said in a determined tone.

Moore winced as though he had received a blow. Nevertheless his voice was clear and unfaltering as he answered:

"Winnie Farrell is married to the man of her choice. Surely there is no need to throw her name in my face when I tell you that I love you?"

"You told Winnie the same thing," said Bessie, coldly.

Moore gave an exclamation of pain.

"I 've explained that misunderstanding a score of times," he said, bitterly. "They tricked me that you might think me unworthy of your trust and so be persuaded to come to London. Like a fool I walked into the trap and you believed me faithless. On my honor, you wronged me, dearest. I 've loved but you

Bessie; you are all in all to me, mavourneen. Won't you — can't you — believe me?"

Bessie's lips trembled as she averted her face, but her voice showed no signs of relenting as she answered:

"Whether you love me or not matters very little to me, Mr. Moore."

"The applause at Drury Lane has changed you, Bessie. You are like all the others; one glimpse of the footlights and the rest of the world may go hang."

"Nonsense!" said the girl. "I don't care a snap of my fingers for the theatre. I was never intended to be an actress."

"I know," assented the poet, "you were meant to be Mrs. Moore, darling."

"I think you are quite mistaken, sir."

"How cold you are to me," cried Moore in despair. "Is it because —? No, I can't believe *that*. Bessie, you don't care for Sir Percival?"

"Really, Mr. Moore, I cannot discuss my private affairs with you," said Bessie in a voice so cold and proud that Moore abandoned all hope of moving her.

"Then," he asked defiantly, "why have you come here?"

Bessie turned to him with a little sobbing sigh of relief. She had played her part well and kept up the artifice to the last moment required by the object which she had intended to accomplish, but the task had been more difficult than she had expected.

"Why?" she cried, her voice thrilling with love and happiness. "To tell you that you need battle with poverty no longer, Tom Moore. You have won, Tom, you have won. Fame, fortune — all that you have

"YOU ARE ALL IN ALL TO ME, MAVOURNEEN."

dreamed of and fought for so long — so patiently and courageously — shall be yours. I bring you a message from the Prince of Wales."

"From the Prince?" gasped Moore.

"Yes, Tom. He accepts the dedication of your book. Lord Brooking sent me to tell you the news."

"You mean it, Bessie?" cried the half-frantic poet, as the door was sent slamming back by the entrance of Lord Brooking with Buster and the bulldog close at his heels.

"Lord Brooking, is it true?"

"The Prince declares himself honored by the dedication," replied his lordship triumphantly. "McDermot publishes your book in a week."

Moore gave a choking sob of joy as he groped his way toward his benefactor.

"At last!" he whispered, "at last!" and buried his face on his lordship's sturdy shoulder, his eyes full of glad tears.

"There, there, Tom," said the young nobleman. "It is quite true. Your luck has finally changed. There shall be no more striving and starving for you, my good lad. Your fortune is made."

"Ah," cried Moore, turning to where Bessie stood, her hands tightly clasped and her face radiant with gladness as she watched her lover's realization of the truth. "You hear, Bessie? It 's success, girl, it 's fortune and renown. Aye, fortune, Bessie. *Now* you will marry me?"

The girl turned white with anger and shame. Moore had made a fatal choice of the words with which he re-declared his love, never thinking his meaning could be misunderstood.

"Tom," said Lord Brooking, warningly, but Bessie interrupted him before he could put things right.

"How dare you?" she cried, her cheeks suddenly flaming as she faced the luckless poet.

"Bessie?" cried Moore appealingly, seeing his error too late.

"How dare you?" she repeated, her voice quivering as she stamped her foot in her anger. "Fortune! You hurl the word in my face as though I were to be bought by wealth. Do you think because prosperity has come I must of necessity change my answer? You believe you could bribe me to say 'Yes' with your success. Oh, how could you, Tom Moore?"

"No, no, Bessie," cried the poet, "you know I did not think that."

"Hush, sir," she answered, moving towards the door with downcast eyes.

"I beg of you to listen to me, Bessie. You know — you must know — I could not think what you fear?"

"Let me go, sir. Lord Brooking, I appeal to you."

His lordship touched Moore on the shoulder as the poet sought to prevent the departure of the enraged girl.

"Some other time, Tom. Words can do no good now," he said, softly.

Moore withdrew his hand from Bessie's arm and she opened the door as he stepped back.

"Have you nothing to say to me?" he murmured, hoarsely, as she turned on the threshold.

"Yes," she answered. "I hate you, I hate you," and closed the door.

For a moment Moore stood staring at the spot where she had paused; then he turned with an oath.

"You heard that, Lord Brooking?" he cried bitterly. "You saw that? That ends it all. I 'm through with the old dream forever. I 'll go back to Ireland. Back to the green fields and rippling brooks. I 'm through with London. I 've starved here. It has broken my heart and I hate it. In Ireland I will be with my friends — my own people. There I will forget her. I will learn to hate her. Aye, to hate her."

And he threw himself heavily into his arm-chair.

Lord Brooking stepped quickly forward.

"You are right, Moore," said he. "Tear her from your heart."

"Yes," cried the poet, desperately.

"There are other women much more fair than she. Go back to Ireland and forget her."

"I will, sir."

"*Leave her to Sir Percival Lovelace!*"

Moore started to his feet with a cry of protest.

"No, I 'm damned if I do, Lord Brooking."

"Ah," said his lordship, greatly relieved. "I thought you would change your mind."

Book Three

"Oh! what was love made for, if it's not the same
Thro' joy and thro' torment, thro' glory and shame?
I know not, I ask not, if guilt's in that heart,
I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art."

Chapter Fifteen

SETS FORTH CERTAIN EXPLANATIONS

LORD BROOKING spoke truly when he declared that the dedication of Moore's volume of poems accepted by the Prince would bring fame and prosperity to the young Irishman, who had toiled with such enthusiasm and unwavering diligence in paraphrasing and adapting the Odes of Anacreon. Arrayed and ornamented by his brilliant fancy, owing as much to their translator as to Anacreon himself, they were given to the world and received with such choruses of commendation from both the public and the critics that the reputation of Thomas Moore was firmly established by his first book. Society delighted itself by showing favor to the author it had hitherto neglected. Moore became a stranger to privation and occupied the best suite in the dwelling presided over by Mrs. Malone, who now was numbered in the ranks of his greatest admirers. In fact the old woman seemed to take a personal pride in the social success of her lodger, and followed with an enthusiasm worthy of a better cause his course in the upper world as traced by the papers in their reports of the diversions of the aristocracy. Moore remained quite unchanged by his sudden good fortune. Never even in his darkest hour had he doubted that he deserved success, and,

now that it had come, he accepted it as his just earnings and valued it as nothing more, though jubilant that his merits had at last been recognized. His reception by the world of society was more than flattering. Where he was invited first because he was the poetic lion of the season he was asked again on account of his own charming personality. Moore the poet opened the door of the drawing-room for Moore the society man, who was forthwith made an honored and much-sought guest. He sang his own songs in a melting baritone that struck a responsive chord in the hearts of young and old alike. His ballads were the most popular of the day. Romantic swains and sentimental maidens warbled them on every possible occasion; but none equalled in feeling and grace the manner in which they were rendered by the hitherto unknown youth who had penned them. The grand dames were often rivals in their attempts to secure the poet's presence at their *musicales* and receptions. The young bucks sought him as guest at their late suppers, while the publishers bid against one another for the privilege of printing his next book, as, in spite of his gadding about from function to function, Moore contrived to find time to continue his literary labors. Lord Moira, thanks to the glowing representations of his nephew, made much of the poet, and through his influence Moore became acquainted with certain of the great gentlemen of the time who had but few moments to waste on social amenities, and were therefore far more exclusive than the better-known figures in the gay world drawing its guiding inspiration from Carlton House. Though Moore did not lose his head as a result of the flattery and admiration now showered

upon him, it would have been strange indeed if he had not secretly exulted over the triumph he had won. His almost juvenile delight was frankly acknowledged by him in the long and loving letters he wrote to the members of his own family, who in distant Dublin gloried in the London victory of the firstborn. It was no odd or unusual thing for the poet to be seen at three or four fashionable gatherings in one evening. His presentation to the Prince of Wales, whose condescension had made certain the success of the Odes, followed soon after the publication of the book, and prince and poet were equally charmed, each with the other. Moore seized upon this meeting as an opportunity to tender to his Highness the thanks previously conveyed for him by Lord Brooking. To his great delight, Wales graciously declared that he considered himself honored by the dedication of the volume, and expressed a hope that they might have the opportunity of enjoying each other's society on many occasions in the near future. Moore came away that evening belonging wholly to the Regent, for, when that noble gentleman willed it so, no one could be more charming, and as his Highness was distinctly taken with the clever and modest young poet, he saw fit to be more than usually condescending and agreeable. He had chatted genially with Moore on literary topics of present interest, complimented him on the grace and rippling beauty of his translation of the Odes, and warmly applauded the young Irishman's singing of several of his own ballads. Taking all things into consideration, Moore had every reason except one to be content with his present lot. That the single disturbing element in his existence was the misunderstanding with

Bessie Dyke need scarcely be asserted. They met frequently in society, for, thanks to the influence of Sir Percival, the doors which Moore had pried apart by mighty effort with his pen, had opened in easy welcome to the beautiful young actress, who, though coldly pleasant in her demeanor, made no attempt to conceal her desire to avoid Moore when the opportunity offered. As he, hurt and hopeless, made but little effort to force his company upon her, they might have been comparative strangers for all the evidence of mutual interest they gave at the various social gatherings when they chanced to meet, so, though several months had elapsed since Moore emerged from obscurity, no progress had been made in his love affair.

Sir Percival Lovelace had contemplated his rival's sudden rise to fame with interest, not unmixed with cynical amusement, his humorous sensibilities being rarely tickled at his own discomfiture, for this pleasant gentleman was philosopher enough to extract cause for merriment from his own disappointments and miscalculations. But the real reason for the toleration exhibited by the baronet was the confidence he felt that he had in his possession a weapon which, when he chose to wield it, would not fail to utterly destroy Moore in the estimation and good graces of the Regent, for Sir Percival felt certain that the loss of royal favor would result in the social ruin of his rival. As he thought he had ascertained by various means that there was comparatively little likelihood of the differences between Bessie and her lover being patched up, Sir Percival had held back the blow which he intended should completely demolish the prosperity of the poet, deciding to allow Moore to climb even higher on the

ladder of fortune before knocking it from beneath his feet, that a greater fall might follow. But meanwhile the baronet had not been idle in other directions. Like many other gentlemen of the quill, Robin Dyke imagined that he was possessed of much ability in affairs of finance, and as numerous opportunities were ever at hand for indulgence in such hazards as are afforded by stock speculation to the unwary, he succeeded in quickly and secretly losing all the money he made over and above the funds necessary to maintain the modest little home tenanted by himself and daughter. After much mental debating he mentioned his indiscretion to his patron, who, scenting immediately a chance to secure a much-desired hold upon the foolish old gentleman, at his own suggestion loaned Dyke three hundred pounds, taking notes at ninety days' sight in exchange for the sum, stipulating that the matter should be kept from Bessie. Dyke, naturally reluctant to admit the previous ill-success of his investments to his daughter, readily consented to accept this condition, and without more ado proceeded to send good money after bad by repeating his financial mistakes. This time he hesitated very little before acquainting Sir Percival with his lack of success, and found no difficulty in securing a further loan of another three hundred pounds, the investment of which resulted in even more brilliant disaster than before. Sanguine ever of ultimate success which should retrieve the losses already incurred, the worthy but foolish old rhymer increased his indebtedness to Sir Percival until he owed him in all one thousand pounds without Bessie having even a suspicion of the true state of affairs. Time passed and the notes matured, but Dyke, having no means

of settling, frankly announced the fact to his patron and received reassuring smiles in return, a reply which fully contented him. The baronet affected to be quite indifferent as to the length of the period he might have to wait for his money, and told Dyke to take his own time in repaying him. This the old gentleman proceeded to do and thus made possible the events to be described in succeeding chapters.

Chapter Sixteen

TOM MOORE SEPARATES A YOUNG LADY FROM HER SKIRT

IT was at the splendid mansion of Lady Donegal that Moore first met Mr. Sheridan. Introduced to the famous wit by no less a person than George Brummell himself, Moore found not unworthily bestowed the reverence he had felt from his boyhood for the brilliant but erratic Irishman whose previous success in the fashionable world of London had served to render less difficult the progress of his younger countryman when once begun, and on this evening was laid the foundation of the friendship destined to endure until the melancholy end of the elder genius. Mr. Walter Scott, as yet famed only for his verse romances, for this was some years before the fiery genius of Lord Byron, now a fat youth at Eton, drove the genial Scotchman from the lyric field into the world of prose where he has reigned supreme even to this day, was another notable with whom Moore became immediately and delightfully intimate. The sturdy intellect of Scott, who infused his vigorous personality into all that flowed so readily from his pen, was delighted and amazed at the grace and beauty of the Irishman's more delicate imagery, while the refined and subtler fancy of the younger poet was filled with wonder by the other's stirring, rakehelly

border ballads. Scott was the sturdy, gnarled, and defiant oak in the literary forest; Moore the tender, clinging ivy, enfolding and beautifying all that he touched and lingered on. No wonder, then, that their admiration should be reciprocal. The intimate crony of these brilliant men, the hostess herself was a woman of refined taste and much personal charm. In her Moore found a true and admiring friend, and whenever he, for business or pleasure, was compelled to absent himself from London, a delightful correspondence was kept up, as pleasing to the great lady of fashion as to the poet, for Moore, ever a favorite among men, was not less popular with the opposite sex, no matter what their rank in the world might be.

While he had good reason to treasure the friendship of Lady Donegal for the sake of the brilliant acquaintances whom he met at her mansion for the first time, even a more tender and pleasing opportunity for gratitude was to be afforded him, for here it was that transpired the series of incidents which resulted finally in his reconciliation with Bessie Dyke.

On the night in question Moore arrived in company with Sheridan and Brummell, the two Irishmen having spied the Beau in a cab driving to the reception at Lady Donegal's as they were making their way toward the same destination on foot. They hailed the vehicle, and when the driver had pulled up in obedience to a signal somewhat unwillingly given by Brummell, climbed in with hardly as much as a beg your leave, making themselves quite comfortable in spite of the remonstrances of the crowded and berumpled dandy, the three thus reaching her ladyship's great mansion together.

Moore paid his respects to his hostess, then, after a brief session in the card-room with Mr. Sheridan, which resulted in the enrichment of the elder Celt to the extent of two guineas, made his way to a room usually little frequented by the less intimate company, intending to give definite shape in black and white to a new song as yet unwritten, the garbled and uncompleted verses of which had been running and jumping in his head all day.

Much to his surprise, Moore found the writing desk in use, the young lady who was busy scribbling being no other than Bessie Dyke. His first impulse was to make a quiet exit, trusting to his noiselessness to effect escape undiscovered, but reflecting that, as hitherto he had not had so excellent an opportunity for an uninterrupted conversation, he would be foolish to allow such a chance for attempting to right himself in her estimation to go unutilized, he thought better of it, and so remained, announcing his presence by a polite little cough, highly suggestive of a timidity but slightly feigned.

Bessie looked up from her writing, then continued her occupation until she had completed her task.

"Am I interrupting you, Mistress Dyke?"

"Does it look as though you were, Mr. Moore?" she asked, tartly.

"Not exactly," he admitted, not at all encouraged by her manner; "but appearances are deceiving, you know."

"I usually accept them as conclusive," said she, folding the sheet of paper which she had just finished.

"I know you do," said Moore, plaintively. "It is a bad habit to get into."

"No doubt you speak as an authority on the subject, Mr. Moore?"

"On bad habits? It is a bad habit I have of speaking, you mean, Mistress Dyke?"

Bessie nodded and turned toward him, resting one chubby elbow upon the desk.

"How London has changed you," sighed Moore, regretfully, shaking his head as he spoke.

"And you?" said the girl in a critical tone. "Surely Mr. Thomas Moore, the friend of the Prince, is very different from an unknown Irish rhymer?"

"Rhymer?" repeated he. "I see you have been talking with Sir Percival."

"To be sure," said Bessie. "So pleasant and witty a gentleman is worthy of attention."

Moore sighed, and drawing a chair nearer to the desk sat down and crossed his legs comfortably.

"See here, Bessie," he said in his most persuasive tones, "why should we quarrel in this foolish fashion?"

The girl laughed in rather an embarrassed way and shifted a little on the chair.

"If there is some other fashion in which you would prefer to quarrel, perhaps it will be as acceptable as this," she replied, lightly.

"Will you never be serious?" demanded the poet.

"Why should I be serious, sir?"

"To please me, if for no other reason."

"Ah, but why should I wish to please you, Mr. Moore?"

"It is a woman's duty to make herself agreeable."

"Not to every impudent young versifier who thinks to do her honor with his attention," replied Bessie,

smiling mischievously as she rebuked an unruly ringlet with one dimpled hand.

"But I have no such idea," protested Moore, quite baffled by her behavior.

"No? Surely a young man who proposes marriage to two different girls in one afternoon must think very well of himself?"

Moore groaned, and gave the girl an appealing glance that failed to accomplish anything.

"Ah, Bessie, you have no heart!"

"Have you, *Mr. Moore?*"

"You have had it these two years, Bessie," he replied, fervidly.

"You are quite mistaken, sir," quoth she, in tones of conviction. "I would have no use for such a thing, so would not accept it. You are thinking of some other girl, *Mr. Moore.*"

"I am thinking of you, Bessie."

"Then you are wasting your time, *Mr. Moore,* and I 'll thank you to say 'Mistress Dyke' in the future when you address me."

"I 'd like to say 'Mrs. Moore,'" replied the poet.

"What did you say, sir?" she demanded shortly, an angry flash in her eyes.

"I said I 'd know more some day."

"That is certainly to be hoped," said Bessie. "One should be sanguine, no matter how futile such cheerfulness may appear at the present time."

So far Moore had succeeded but poorly in breaking down the girl's reserve, and though painfully conscious of his failure, was nevertheless quite resolved that the interview should not end with their present attitudes unaltered.

That she herself was not averse to listening to his arguments this evening was already fully proved, for she had made no effort to conclude their conversation, and in fact seemed waiting with no little interest for the next attempt he might make to restore himself to his old-time place in her regard.

"Mistress Dyke," began Moore, hopefully, favoring the girl with a look as languishing as love could make it, "do you know what your mouth reminds me of as you sit there?"

"Cherries?" suggested the girl promptly. "I believe that is the usual comparison made by lame-witted poets."

"No, indeed. Cherries conceal pits, and, as you no doubt remember, Joseph fell into one. Now I am no Joseph."

"No," said Bessie. "You are more like Charles Surface, I fancy."

"Never mind mixing the Drama with this conversation," replied Moore, chidingly. "Forget for a moment that you are an actress and remember you are a woman, though no doubt it amounts to the same thing."

"Well, what *does* my mouth remind you of, Mr. Moore?" asked the girl, her curiosity getting the better of her.

"Of better things, Mistress Dyke."

"Indeed? What may they be, sir?"

"Kisses," replied the poet lightly. "Ah, Bessie, it is glad that I am that your mouth is no smaller."

"And why so?" she asked, suspiciously.

"The smaller a woman's mouth, the greater the temptation."

"'THE SMALLER A WOMAN'S MOUTH THE GREATER THE TEMPTATION,' SAID MOORE."

"Is that what you call me?"

"Your mouth, my dear. Alluring is no name for it. Temptation? Aye, that it is. Twin ribbons of rosy temptation, or I 'm no Irishman."

"We won't dwell upon that subject," announced Bessie.

"If I were a honey-bee, I 'd live and die there," said Moore, sincerely.

"Where?" asked the girl.

"On the subject, *if I were a honey-bee.*"

"The subject is closed," she answered, compressing her lips in anything but an amiable expression.

"I don't like it so well that way."

"How you like it does not interest me at all, sir."

"Now I wish to speak to you seriously," said Moore with becoming gravity. "Please give me your attention."

"I am listening, sir," she answered, a trifle uneasily.

"Very well, then. Don't you think women should try to make men better?"

"Yes."

"And to reduce their temptations?"

"Yes."

"Then, for instance, if you had a loaf of bread you did not need and knew a man was starving for it, would n't you rather give it to him than have him steal it and be responsible for the sin?"

"Yes," said Bessie, "I would, undoubtedly."

"Ah," exclaimed Moore, happily, "then if I tell you I am starving for a kiss and feel afraid I may steal it, you will give me one to put me out of temptation?"

"On the contrary, I shall request you to cease talking nonsense, and suggest that you had better sit down."

"I will, if it pleases you," replied Moore, smiling sweetly at the girl, as he resumed the chair from which he had risen in his eagerness a moment before.

"Oh," said Bessie, in a sarcastic tone, "you think you are very clever, don't you?"

"Why should I deny it? A good opinion is like charity, and should begin at home."

"Does any one else think you are clever, Mr. Moore?"

"I don't know," answered the poet cheerfully; "but if they do not, it only makes my opinion more valuable on account of its rarity."

Bessie was compelled to smile by this ingenious argument, and sought refuge behind her fan; but Moore, seeing he had scored, followed up his success resolutely.

"As you say," he continued, "I am clever."

"But," said Bessie indignantly, "I did not say that."

"You forget," replied Moore, loftily, "that a man's opinion of what a woman thinks is based largely on what she does not say."

"You surprise me, Mr. Moore. Pray explain your last assertion."

"Well, then, for example, I linger by your side and you do not say 'Go away,' so my opinion is that you wish me to remain."

"Oh," exclaimed Bessie, shocked at the mere idea of such a thing.

"You do not say 'I hate you,' so my opinion is that you l—"

"Mr. Moore," cried Bessie, sternly, and the poet diplomatically allowed her interruption to finish his remark.

"Men are so foolish," observed the girl, knitting her brows in sad contemplation of masculine idiocy. "Really it is quite saddening when one considers their stupidity."

"And yet," said Moore, "if we were not such fools you wise little ladies would find it much more difficult to work your wills."

"I am not so sure of that," said Bessie, with a sniff of superiority. "Men are great nuisances at best."

"Had you rather I went away?" asked Moore, in his most honeyed accents. "Shall I go?"

"You must suit your own inclination, sir," replied Bessie, too clever to be so entrapped.

"And you?" he returned. "Can't you say 'I wish you to stay'?"

"No, Mr. Moore."

"And why not, Mistress Dyke?"

"Girls do not say such things to men."

Moore sighed regretfully.

"I wish they did," said he. "Don't you like me at all any more?"

"Not very much," replied Bessie, with seeming frankness.

"Won't you smile at me?"

"No," said Bessie, determinedly, "I will not."

As she spoke she turned away from the poet, but he was not to be so easily defeated.

"Bessie," he whispered tenderly. "Smile at me, dearest, smile just once."

"No," she answered firmly, "I will not. I don't have to smile if I don't wish to, do I?"

But, alas for her determination, as she replied her

eyes met those of Moore; the twinkling merriment which she read in her lover's gaze was too much for her gravity, and so, in spite of her effort to keep a sober face, she smiled back at him, and if it was not the love-light that shone beneath her long lashes, it was a something so entirely like it that a wiser man than the young Irishman would have been pardonable for making such a mistake.

"Oh," he said, lovingly triumphant, "what do you think about it now?"

"Well," said Bessie, in quick equivocation, "I wanted to smile then. You are very ridiculous, Mr. Moore."

"You make me so, Bessie."

"What did I tell you about that name?" she demanded, rising to her feet.

"I forgot, Bessie," he replied defiantly.

"If that is the case you shall have the opportunity to recall it to mind," said she, sternly, at the same time moving towards the door. But her foot caught in her skirt and as she recovered her balance with a little cry there was an ominous sound of ripping plainly heard.

"There," cried Bessie in a rage, "I 've stepped on a ruffle. It is all your fault, Tom Moore."

"Of course it is," replied the poet. "It always is, as we both know."

Bessie, meanwhile, had investigated the extent of the damage she had sustained. The lace ruffle on her underskirt had been torn off for at least two feet. The thing was utterly ruined, and, gritting her teeth as she realized this, Bessie tried to tear off the loose piece. This, however, proved to be beyond her strength, so,

"I CAN BREAK THE PLAGUEY THING, MISTRESS DYKE."

abandoning the attempt with an exclamation of rage, she stamped her foot in anger.

"Let me help you," said Moore politely. "No doubt, I can break the plaguey thing, Mistress Dyke."

"You are the cause of all the trouble," said Bessie, crossly.

"All the more reason, then, for letting me help you repair the damage. You can't dance with that trailing in front of you."

Moore took the end of the ruffle which Bessie held out to him, and, securing a firm grip upon it, marched across the room, thus ripping off the entire bottom of the skirt.

"Thank you," said Bessie, more graciously, extending her hand for the torn piece.

Moore shook his head and held the ruffle behind him.

"Give it to me, sir," exclaimed the girl indignantly.

"It is the foam on the wave of loveliness," declared the poet, waving his prize as though it were a pennant, but carefully keeping it out of Bessie's reach.

"You cannot have it, sir," she said, sternly.

"Women are enveloped in mystery," he continued, quite unrebuked, "yards of it. If there is anything I love, it is mystery, so I 'll keep this for myself."

"Why?"

"For a souvenir. Think of the memories associated with it, Bessie."

"What good will it be to you?" she asked, rather more pleasantly.

"It would be a great success as a necktie," Moore went on, draping it beneath his chin. "Thusly, for instance, or I might wear it on my arm, or next my heart."

"Give me that ruffle," cried Bessie, snatching at it as she spoke, and by good luck catching it.

"Let go," commanded Moore. "If you don't I 'll kiss your hands for you."

"Oh, *no,* you won't."

But he did.

"Please," pleaded the girl, not letting go.

"I don't intend to keep it, Bessie, on my word of honor."

Confident that she had secured her object, the girl released the ruffle and stepped back.

"Thank you, Mr. Moore," said she, waiting expectantly.

"Oh, not at all, Mistress Dyke. What are you waiting for?"

"For that."

"But you do not get this, Mistress Dyke."

"But you promised, sir."

"I did not say I would *give it to you,*" explained Moore, genially. "I merely promised that I would *not keep* it. Well, I won't. I happen to have your card in my pocket — it 's a wonder it is n't the mitten you have presented me with so often — and this card I shall pin on the ruffle, which I shall then hang on this candelabra, where it will remain until found by some one, and what they will think of you then is beyond my power to imagine."

Moore suited the action to the word as he spoke, and the bundle of frills was securely perched on the candle-rack protruding from the wall a good seven feet from the floor before Bessie fully realized how completely she had been outwitted.

Then she lost her temper entirely.

"You cheat," she cried furiously. "Oh, I should have known better than to trust you."

"Certainly you should," replied the poet, politely agreeing with the irate damsel. "I was surprised myself at the simplicity of your behavior."

"However," she continued, "I shall never believe you again."

"Never?"

"*Never,* Mr. Moore, and I am very angry with you."

"Really?" asked he. "Why, whoever would have suspected it, Bessie?"

"Luckily I can get it without your assistance," she went on. "You are not half so smart as you imagine."

"Of course not," observed Moore, watching her as she stood on tiptoe and vainly endeavored to reach the cause of all the trouble. "Take care, Bessie, or you 'll tear something else."

The girl was baffled only for the moment, for directly beneath the candelabra stood the desk at which she had been writing a few moments before. As the top, which when open formed the writing table, was let down, it was an easy thing for her to step up on it from the seat of a chair, and then from there to the top of the desk. This was what Bessie did as quickly as was possible, for she was considerably handicapped in her climbing by her long train.

"There is nothing like independence," remarked the poet, observing her with a broad smile, as she performed this manœuvre and stood in triumph on the desk. "Like marriage, it usually begins with a declaration and ends with a fight. It did in America."

"You imagine you are witty," said Bessie, in icy

tones, picking the ruffle from its perch on the candelabra.

Moore stepped quickly forward and shut up the desk. This done he removed the chair by which she had mounted and had her completely at his mercy.

"And you," he said pleasantly, "imagine you are independent."

Bessie turned carefully and discovered her plight with a little exclamation of dismay.

"Put that chair back and open this desk immediately," she commanded sternly.

"The chair is doing very well where it is," replied Moore, calmly sitting down upon it.

Bessie bit her lip in anger.

"It is not customary for a gentleman to sit while a lady remains standing."

"Nor is it usual," answered Moore, "for a lady to climb up on a desk."

"You think you know a lot about women, don't you?"

"I am always willing to learn more," responded the victorious poet, blithely.

"Oh, dear," sighed the girl, "I don't dare jump with these high-heeled slippers on."

"I observe that your tastes are elevated, even in shoes. Give me the ruffle and I 'll help you down."

"No, sir, you shall not have it."

"Hurry, I think I hear some one coming," exclaimed Moore in an alarmed tone.

"Do help me down."

"The ruffle first."

"Oh, there you are," she cried, abandoning herself to utter defeat as she tossed him the bribe he demanded.

"NOR IS IT USUAL FOR A LADY TO CLIMB UP ON A DESK," SAID MOORE.

Once safely on the floor, Bessie ran lightly to the entrance leading to the adjoining room and peeped out to see who was approaching. Much to her astonishment she discovered no one near, then, turning, read in Moore's laughing eyes how cleverly she had been tricked.

"There is no one coming," she said severely.

"Is there not?" asked the poet, stowing away the prize he had won in his coat-tail pocket. "Shall I help you up on the table again?"

Bessie looked daggers at him, but he smiled blandly back at her in innocent good-nature.

"I am very angry with you," she announced, decisively. "Really, Mr. Moore, your behavior is perfectly intolerable."

"And why are you so provoked? Because I took your ruffle?" queried the poet. "Why angry, since I left the skirt?"

"Mr. Moore!" she cried warningly.

"Well, Mistress?"

"Be careful, sir!"

"I do not have to be," he answered, "but you are very different. Now you dare not be long cross."

"Oh, don't I, indeed? And if I dare not, what is the reason, sir," she demanded in a tone as sarcastic as she could make it, though this, it must be admitted, was not saying much.

"Because," he said, slowly and coolly, "if you do let your temper get the better of you the skirt is liable to follow the ruffle into my possession."

"Insolent," exclaimed the girl, sitting down and carefully turning her back towards her tormentor.

That she was very angry with Moore cannot be

doubted. Probably it was because she was so exasperated at his behavior and so desirous of being plagued no further by him that she remained in this secluded nook instead of returning to the adjacent rooms, the greater number of which were thronged with guests. Certainly her staying where she was could not be regarded as anything but indicative of a sincere desire to be rid of his company. Unfortunately this very evident fact was not plain to the poet, for he proceeded quite as though he interpreted her tarrying as proof of his own success in providing her with pleasant diversion, a grievous error, as any one conversant with the real state of affairs would have admitted.

"Lady Donegal is a delightful hostess, is n't she, Mistress Dyke?"

"At last you have suggested a subject on which we can agree," replied Bessie, stiffly.

"Oh, I can suggest another," said Moore, trying to catch her eye, an undertaking Bessie rendered a failure by resolutely turning her head away.

"What is that, Mr. Moore?"

"You know I think you are very pretty, Bessie."

"As though I care what you think."

"And I know *you* think you are very pretty, so we agree again."

"You think I am conceited."

"I know you have good reason to think well of yourself," answered Moore, sweetly.

"Indeed, sir?"

"Indeed, ma'am, for are you not favored with the undying devotion of one Thomas Moore?"

"Oh," said Bessie, disappointed.

Moore approached her chair and, circling round it,

tried to make her look him in the face, but she foiled all his attempts by twisting from side to side like a sulky schoolgirl.

"You 'll choke yourself, Bessie," he said, apprehensively. "You 'll have a neck like a corkscrew before long."

"There would be no danger if you would cease intruding yourself upon my meditation," snapped the girl, crossly.

"'She who meditates is lost,'" quoted the poet. "Ah, Bessie darlin', look around at me. Won't you, Bessie? Do, there 's a dear."

"I am not to be fooled by your blarneying tongue, Mr. Moore. I, too, am Irish."

"You don't behave like it," said he.

"You do not regulate my behavior, sir."

"I wish I did," remarked Moore. "I could improve it a good deal without much effort."

"You need not trouble."

"Oh, no trouble at all, I assure you."

"Your assurance is the best part of you, Mr. Moore."

"I could n't say what part of you is the best, dearest," he answered in a soothing tone, that only made the girl more angry. "Collectively you outclass any colleen in the Kingdom. Now will you look around at me?"

"No."

"You won't? If you do not behave I will have to punish you."

"*You* punish *me?*" she repeated scornfully. "You forget yourself, Mr. Moore."

"That is because when I am near you I can think

of no one else. If you don't look around and bestow on me one of your sweetest smiles I shall not permit you to leave the room."

"I 'll go the moment I am ready."

"Oh, no you won't, if I decide to make you my prisoner," he predicted. "Your last chance, my dear young lady; will you do as I ask?"

"Not I, Mr. Moore," she answered, keeping her face resolutely turned from him. This was what he desired, for without attracting her attention he lifted the hem of her dress, and putting perhaps a foot of the skirt in one of the drawers of the desk, shoved it shut and locked it, thus effectually tethering her. She heard the click of the key, but not suspecting the cause of the noise, continued her inspection of vacancy, while Moore, bubbling over with his merry triumph, retired to the opposite side of the room.

"You are locked up now, Bessie," he announced with a chuckle. "If you will cast your eye to the left you will see how securely I hold you."

Bessie, her curiosity aroused by the satisfaction perceptible in the poet's voice, rose, intending to investigate the state of affairs from the centre of the room. A sudden tug at her dress which nearly tilted her over backwards on her little high heels brought her to an astonished standstill, and turning, she perceived the result of Moore's scheming.

"How dare you?" she cried, this time really angry.

"I hardly know myself," he answered gayly. "I think it must be the courage of despair."

Meanwhile the girl had made several unsuccessful attempts to withdraw her dress from the closed drawer, and, abandoning the effort, turned in maidenly fury upon her captor.

"You wretch!"

"You are locked in, Bessie, dear."

"Give me the key instantly, Mr. Moore. Do you hear?"

"Yes," replied the poet. "I hear."

"I never saw such a fellow," she began, but he interrupted her blandly.

"There is none like me," he asserted.

"A very fortunate thing for the world, sir."

"But, Bessie, think how many poor young girls there are just pining for such a love as I've offered you, and who will never have the luxury, since there is only one Moore."

"I did n't know you could be so horrid," she said, her voice trembling with anger.

"Oh, I can be even more so," he answered. "In fact, if I want to, I can be about the horridest person there ever was."

"I believe you," she said sincerely. "Once I did rather like you —"

"Indeed? You concealed it amazingly well."

"— but, now I — I —"

"Well, what now?"

"I fairly hate you," she stormed, tugging impatiently at her skirt.

"I am not surprised to hear you say that, Bessie. What is it the poet says?"

"I abominate all poets."

"Let me see. I have it.

> "'What ever's done by one so fair
> Must ever be most fairly done —'

"Even hating, Bessie."

"I 'll call for help unless you release me instantly," she threatened.

"Do you wish everybody to say you were so saucy to me that I had to lock you up? To the ordinary observer, less appreciative of your beauty, you might appear rather ridiculous tethered here. Think how pleasant that would be for all the other young girls, who are already envious of your superior attractions."

This supposition was altogether too likely to prove true for Bessie to force matters as she had announced she intended doing, so she abandoned all idea of outside assistance. Having failed in intimidation she, woman-like, resorted to cajolery.

"Please give me the key, Tom," she said in her sweetest tone.

"I 'll trade with you, Bessie. I 'll give you the key of the desk for a lock of your hair."

"Very well," she answered, much relieved at the insignificance of the ransom demanded.

"I want that little curl to the left of your forehead just in front of your ear," he continued, cunningly selecting a ringlet that could not be shorn without utterly spoiling the girl's appearance indefinitely.

"I can't give you that one," she said, indignantly.

"Oh, very well, then. You shall enjoy solitary confinement for the next five minutes. When that time has expired, I will return and afford you the opportunity of assuring me how much you regret all the cross and inconsiderate things you have said to-night."

"I 'll *never* do that," she cried.

"Usually," asserted Moore, "a girl's *never* means *to-morrow*."

"This instance is an exception."

"True, Bessie, for this time it means five minutes. Behold the key to the problem."

With a teasing gesture Moore held up the bit of brass, the possession of which had made the girl's punishment possible.

"If you go," said the girl, firmly and slowly, "it means we shall never be friends again."

"Pooh!" observed the poet with an indifference most insulting, "you do not frighten me in the least, my dear. I do not wish to be your friend."

So saying, he deposited the key in his pocket and walked toward the door with a self-satisfied swagger.

Bessie, driven to desperation, was about to call to him not to go, hoping he would propose some other terms of settlement, when he took his handkerchief out of his pocket and waved it at her before stepping out of the room. She smothered a little cry of delight and waited impatiently for his steps to die away as he walked toward the farther door of the apartment adjacent. Moore had carelessly drawn the key out of his pocket with his handkerchief, and it had dropped noiselessly upon the floor, the sound of its fall deadened by the soft carpet.

"Now, how can I get that key?" thought Bessie. "If I only had a long stick! I 'll try to reach it with a chair."

But she could not come within a yard of it even with this help.

"I wish I knew how to swear," she murmured. "I really believe I would. Perhaps I can pick the lock with a hairpin. I have heard of prisoners escaping in that way. Prisoner. *Tom's prisoner.*"

She smiled involuntarily, and then, realizing what she was doing, gave herself a shake of disapproval.

"You should be ashamed of yourself, Bessie Dyke," thought she. "After the way that man has treated you, you should hate him. I will hate him, the horrid thing."

Leaning over, she strove to unlock the drawer with the hairpin but scored a decisive failure, and in consequence again waxed wrathful. The next bright idea that suggested itself to her mind was that she might possibly drag the desk across the floor to where the key lay exasperatingly plain in view, but she found her young strength far too little to even budge the cumbersome old piece of furniture. Then another plan came to her and she gave a little gurgling laugh, half delight, half fear, and began to consider it in detail.

"If I dared, oh, if I dared," she whispered. "I wonder if I can risk it? It would n't take a minute. *I will do it, so there.*"

As she spoke, she fumbled with the fastening of her dress. The next moment it fell from around her waist, and stepping out of the circular heap of millinery surrounding her which it made upon the floor, she was free to go where she pleased.

Flushed with success, and yet frightened beyond measure lest she should be caught by some stray guest in her present incomplete costume, the girl danced laughingly across the floor, keeping out of line with the door for fear some one might enter the next room, and, reaching the key, pounced on it in triumph.

"Now we will see," she laughed. "Oh, you think you are very clever, Mr. Thomas Moore, but I fancy

there are one or two others just as sharp as you are."

Hastening back to the desk, she inserted her prize in the lock and endeavored to turn it, but did not succeed in doing so, for it did not fit at all well. She tried again and again, but no better success rewarded her efforts, and slowly it dawned upon her that this was not the required key. She had again fallen victim to the cunning of the young Irishman.

"It is n't the one," she cried. "It is much too big. Oh, he did it on purpose. What *shall* I do?"

It was quite evident that she could not long remain in such abbreviated attire without being detected by some one.

A vigorous pull at the skirt now limply pendant from the prisoning drawer proved that it was just as impossible to release it when vacated by its owner as when it adorned her person. In fact, Bessie's brilliant idea had availed her not in the least, and, realizing this, she was about to step into the skirt with a view to assuming her shackling finery, when the sound of her tormentor's voice, singing softly to himself as he approached, gave her warning of his coming.

With a little gasp of alarm Bessie fled to the cover of the portières which separated the window recess from the room and sheltered by their clinging folds waited for developments.

Chapter Seventeen

HONORS ARE EASY

THE poet strode gayly into the room, quite at peace with the world and decidedly pleased with one Thomas Moore, in both these particulars holding opinions widely differing from the views cherished by the young lady concealed behind the curtains.

"What?" remarked Moore. "Is she gone? Dear me, how unkind of her to go without saying good-bye."

Then, apparently observing the skirt for the first time, he continued:

"Ah, she has left this behind for me as a souvenir of the occasion. How considerate of her."

Stooping, he unlocked the drawer and drew forth the imprisoned millinery. Then flinging it carelessly over his arm, he started toward the door, apparently intending to return to the crowded rooms which he had just quitted.

From behind the curtains Bessie regarded his actions with an exasperation and helplessness which were about equally possessed of her mind. What should she do? If she betrayed her presence she would be more than ever at his mercy, yet it was clearly impossible to allow him to carry off her skirt, as he seemed

to purpose doing. Abandoning all pride, she gave a squeak of alarm as Moore reached the door.

"Did I hear some one address me?" he demanded, turning on the threshold.

"Sir," said Bessie, desperately from the window, her brown head visible between the curtains.

"Oh, you are there, are you?" said Moore, apparently greatly astonished.

"Bring me that — *That,*" she said, blushing a little as she spoke.

"That what?" he asked.

She pointed angrily at the skirt adorning his arm.

"That," she repeated more loudly.

"This?" said he, obtusely, holding up his prize.

"Yes. Give it to me immediately."

"But," objected Moore, "I don't know that you have any right to it. Can you prove it to be your property?"

"I can," replied Bessie with emphasis, "but I won't."

"I am sorry, Mistress Dyke, but under the circumstances I really must refuse."

"But it is mine, Mr. Moore."

"But I have no proof that it is n't somebody else's. Perhaps it belongs to Mr. Sheridan."

"What nonsense."

"Oh, I don't know about that. Richard Brinsley is said to be fond of the petticoats. Perhaps this is one he carries around with him. I 'll go ask the old boy."

"Don't you dare," she cried.

"Well, can you identify this as your property?" insisted the poet, not loth to prolong her discomfiture.

"Certainly, sir," she replied. "You will find a handkerchief in the pocket with my initials stitched in the corner with white silk."

"All right, my dear," said Moore, looking for the pocket and not finding it immediately. "Where is the infernal — Oh, I have it!"

And inserting his hand in the elusive object of his quest he drew forth a powder puff.

"Oh," said Bessie, and vanished behind the curtains, while Moore viewed his recent find with delighted curiosity.

"What 's this, Bessie?"

No answer rewarded his inquiry.

"Oh, I understand," he went on. "This is the frosting on the cake of beauty."

Then, carefully powdering himself, he crossed to the mirror over the mantel on the opposite side of the room and inspected the result of his labor.

"Humph," said he. "I look seasick. I 'll have none of this for me."

And he industriously rubbed his face with his handkerchief.

"Oh, do hurry up," implored the girl, fearful lest some other of the guests should enter the room before she recovered her belongings.

"I was not made in a hurry," replied Moore. "The more haste the less speed, so I 'll take my time in my investigations."

The next thing he took from the pocket was a little black and white sketch of himself which had been drawn at a supper party the week before by no less distinguished a gentleman than Samuel Rogers, the banker poet.

"My picture!" he exclaimed in surprise. "How did you get this, Bessie?"

"If you must know, Mr. Rogers threw it away and I picked it up," she replied, displaying as much regard for the truth as any of her sex would be likely to under the same circumstances.

"I 'm honored, Mistress Dyke," observed Moore, bowing to the portière with formal grace and politeness. "You show much taste in your selection of works of art."

Proceeding with his search, Moore now brought to light the handkerchief, which he promptly confiscated.

"Mistress Dyke," he said, at the same time tucking away the handkerchief in his breast pocket, "I am now convinced that this is your property."

"Then give it to me at once," she directed.

"Not yet," said Moore. "If I remember correctly, I made a statement to you concerning an apology which I thought should be forthcoming to me. Well, I have n't received it as yet."

"Bully!" remarked Bessie as spitefully as she could, which was not a little.

"Did I hear aright?" asked Moore. "Did I hear some one call me a bully?"

"Please, oh, please, give me — that!" she pleaded, but Moore was not to be turned aside from his march to triumph.

"Did I hear some one say 'Tom, I am truly sorry for my crossness to-night'?" he asked.

"I won't say it," she declared, but her voice lacked determination.

"I really must be going," said Moore, taking a step towards the door.

She gave a squeal of terror.

"I will, I will!" she cried.

"I hope so, Bessie," he replied, pausing.

"Tom, I am truly sorry for the cross things you have said to me to-night."

She mumbled it quickly, hoping he would not distinguish the adaptation she made in the sentence he had dictated; but Moore heard and defeated her.

"That won't do," he said sternly. "Try again."

"Tyrant!" she exclaimed ferociously.

"That is not a pretty name, Bessie."

"It is appropriate," she said, coldly.

"Go on with the apology."

The girl made an effort and proceeded with her unwilling penance in the meekest of tones.

"Tom, I am truly sorry for the cross things I have said to you to-night. Now give me it."

"Don't be in such a hurry, Bessie. There is more to be said."

"Oh, dear! will you never be satisfied?"

"Not till you are all mine," he answered in his tenderest tones.

"That will be a long time," she said determinedly.

"I can wait, but to continue — Say 'You are an old nuisance, Tom, but I like to have you around.'"

"You are an old nuisance, Tom, but I like to have you around," she repeated, parrot-like; then she added sweetly, "I have something else I wish to tell you."

Deceived by her sentimental tone, Moore stepped near the curtains and like a flash she snapped the skirt off his arm and vanished behind her shelter.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Moore, in chagrin.

The curtains undulated violently as though some vigorous performance were being enacted behind them. The next moment Bessie, fully attired, swept out between them and across the room, her independence and peace of mind restored with the resumption of the purloined garment.

"Bessie," said Moore, persuasively, and she halted on the threshold in haughty response. "Bessie, won't you let me speak to you before you go?"

"I fear it will only be a waste of time, Mr. Moore," she answered.

"Yet I waited when you asked me to from behind the curtains," he said, a glint of laughter in his eyes.

Bessie winced, but the stare she favored him with was both cold and disdainful.

"But, Mr. Moore," she answered, "I had something to say to which you wished to listen."

"You mean," he corrected, "you had to say something, Bessie, that I wished to hear. There never was maid more unwilling to do what she was bid than you."

"Pray hasten your words, sir. I am listening."

"Bessie," he whispered, all the music and poetry to which the love in his heart had given life vibrant in his caressing voice, "Bessie, mavourneen, let 's have done with this bickering. The days of youth fly far too fast for us to waste them in contention. You are the breath of my life, darlin'. Say you 'll take me back to my old place in your heart this night and ne'er send me a-journeying again while we live."

She walked slowly to the fireplace and resting her arm on the mantel above stood looking into the blaze. Moore, encouraged by her return, drew near her.

"You know I love you deeply and truly as any woman has ever been loved," he murmured, standing so close that his warm, eager breath gently stirred and set a-quivering the tiny ringlets clustered on her neck. "And I can't bear to go on like this. You must hear me to-night, Bessie darlin', once and for all. I love you; with all my heart and all my soul I love you, dearest of girls. You planted my heart full of roses of passion the first day that I met you, and each and every bud has come to blossom. Your dear eyes have looked into mine and written your name upon my heart. There is not a curl that steals kisses from your cheek I 'd not give my life to be, unless that curl and the proud head it graces can both be mine. Ah, Bessie, dearest, Bessie, darling, be my wife and make me the happiest man on earth. Aye, or in heaven."

If he could have seen her eyes he would never have listened to the words of her reply, for in their depths shone an answer so sweet and tender and surrendering that even he, oft rejected and almost despairing wooer that he was, could not have mistaken or read as aught else but final. But, resolved not to yield yet, though a love as strong and passionate as his own was tugging at her heart-strings, she kept her face turned from him till her original determination, aided by mischief which prompted her to punish him for all the humiliation she had just suffered at his hands, sufficed to give her control of her emotions. Then she turned coldly and said:

"Tom, you really should put that into rhyme. You have never written a prettier poem."

He started at her words and drew back a pace or two.

"You make a jest of me," he said in an offended tone.

"And why so, sir? I refused to marry you when you were poor."

"Do you think I 've forgotten it?" he demanded.

"Now, if I married you, people would say I took back my 'No' because of your rise in the world. Why, even you once spoke as though you thought I might be influenced by such sordid considerations."

"You do not believe — you never have believed — that I thought you capable of such a vile thing," he responded hotly. "You seized on that as a means to hold me off. You must needs play your game of hide-and-seek till you are weary, regardless of my pain and despair."

"The world would say I married you for your money," she continued, paying no heed to his words. "You know how quick it is to misinterpret the best of motives."

"If they said that they 'd lie, Bessie," said Moore. "Save that I have paid my debts and incurred no others, I 'm no richer, for as yet I 've made no fortune. On my honor, I 'm still as poor as you are pretty, and the glass will show you I must be little better than a beggar. Like your father, dearest, my future — all my hope of wealth and fame these next few years — depends upon the Regent's favor, so it could n't be for aught but love. Ah, alanna, say you 'll have me?"

"No," she answered with great emphasis, and crossed the room. Once on the other side she repeated her reply, but this time in a tone soft and cooing, but if she expected by this last manœuvre to elicit further

wooing from her lover she made a mistake, for, justly wrathful at the treatment she accorded him, he threw caution to the winds.

"So?" he cried, hoarsely. "You still refuse? Then listen to me. I've courted you from the first day I saw you. From the moment our eyes met I've loved you faithfully and truly. I've sung to you of love — I've talked to you of love — I've begged for it upon my knees — and you? You have laughed at me. Because my heart was full of you there was no room for resentment, and I, too, laughed and made a jest of what was breaking it. That is past; I've offered it to you for the last time. I'll never again ask you to be my wife."

"Oh," said the girl, momentarily shocked at his vehemence, but quickly recovering. "Tom, you'll never again ask me to marry you?"

"No," he answered roughly, and sat down beside the fire.

"Then," she went on mournfully, "there is only one thing for me to do."

"What is that?" he asked moodily.

"If you won't ask me to marry you, then some day I — I —"

She hesitated, the words hindered by the smile that could not be denied.

"Well?"

"Then some day I'll have to ask you to marry me."

Moore leaped to his feet.

"Will you, Bessie?" he cried.

"Who knows?" she answered, backing towards the door.

"What would you say?"

"I'd say 'I love you, Tom; will you be my husband?'"

"You would?"

"That is, if I should happen to want you, which is n't at all likely."

Then, with a rippling laugh, Bessie turned her back on him, and strolled off, satisfied that she had avenged her wrongs of the evening. And had she not?

Chapter Eighteen

TOM MOORE MOVES IN DISTINGUISHED COMPANY

SIR PERCIVAL LOVELACE gave a reception in honor of the first appearance of Mistress Bessie Dyke as Lydia Languish in a revival of Mr. Sheridan's successful comedy "The Rivals." So sure was the baronet of his protégée's success that some days previous to the date of the first performance he publicly announced the function to be for the purpose of extending to the winsome actress congratulations upon the triumph he expected her to win. Invitations to the reception were eagerly sought, and correspondingly difficult to obtain, for Sir Percival enjoyed an enviable reputation as a lavish entertainer. The Prince himself promised to attend, for he found amusement in the girlish piquancy of the little player's conversation conspicuously lacking in the more reverential prattle of the great ladies who owed their presence in the upper circle of society to birth instead of brains. Even Mrs. FitzHerbert, once more on friendly terms with the baronet, consented to honor the assemblage with her presence, and all the other leaders and lions of the world of wealth and breeding were favored with invitations — that is, all except one. Thomas Moore, now at the height of his popularity, was overlooked. This was no surprise to the poet, for he

had not been deceived by Sir Percival's apparent desire to overlook their past differences. He felt confident that the baronet would not rest content until he had made every effort to undermine the popularity which he had won as much by his personal charm as by the merit of his poetry, yet, seeing no way in which he could be successfully attacked by his old enemy, he grew more confident as weeks passed with no visible effort to injure his prosperity.

Sir Percival, however, was not losing sight of the main object he had in view when he brought about Bessie's journeying to London. While he fully intended to put an end to Moore's success eventually, he had busied himself in the last few weeks more particularly with his plans for bringing about the forcing of the girl to do his will. By skilful manipulation of the various influences he was able to bring to bear upon persons important in the administration of matters in regard to the smaller dealings in the way of finance, together with the fatuous confidence reposed in him by Mr. Dyke, this ingenious gentleman succeeded in obtaining the issuance of a warrant for the body of the old rhymer in default of complete settlement of his outstanding indebtedness. This accomplished without his intended victim being at all the wiser, he held the document in readiness for his purposed attempt at intimidation. Now it was of course imperative, when he should have kicked from beneath Robin Dyke the props which at present held him above ruin as exemplified in limitless incarceration in a Fleet Street debtors' prison, that Thomas Moore should be in no position to hold forth means of relief. Such being the case Sir Percival devoted himself to making all ready

for the disaster which he hoped and believed would be the culmination of the young Irishman's social career, availing himself in this matter of the advice and services of his agent and mentor, Terence Farrell. Success in all the preparations crowned his efforts to a degree that would have seemed unusual even in a better cause, — a state of affairs that led to much cynical reflection as to the relative easiness of the practices of philanthropy and its antithesis upon the part of the gentleman from whom the impetus for the plotted evil business was obtained.

This was the state of affairs on the evening of Sir Percival's reception.

. . . . . .

Mrs. FitzHerbert regarded Mr. Sheridan with a doubtful expression in eyes famed for their beauty and innocence.

"Mr. Sheridan," she remarked, severely, "I am not sure that Parliament is sufficient excuse for your absence from Drury Lane to-night. Everybody who is anybody was present except the author. Fie, sir! Surely you should take enough interest in your own play to witness its revival."

"Hum," said Mr. Sheridan, "I will promise not to let even Parliament prevent my attendance at the theatre when a play by you shall be presented, madame."

"Do you fancy, sir, that I am not capable of writing a play?"

"Heaven forbid that I should declare any woman incapable of anything in the world, possible or impossible," replied the gentleman thus addressed.

"I am not sure that you intend that remark as a compliment, sir."

"A woman should accept as complimentary all that she is not absolutely certain is intended to be the opposite."

"You would have women very conceited, Mr. Sheridan."

"If you mean, dear lady, that I would not change the sweet creatures, you comprehend me perfectly," replied the old gentleman. "Did you know, Mrs. FitzHerbert, that our friend, Tommy Moore, has been slighted to-night?"

"Indeed," asked the lady in a disappointed tone. "I thought he would surely be here."

"Zooks," drawled a handsome gentleman who, gorgeously attired and carrying himself with mannered dignity, had joined the first-mentioned couple in their corner. "Moore not here? What a bore! I counted on hearing him sing some of his ballads to-night. I am told he has a new one. Some deliciously impossible lyrical statement concerning the steadfastness of the proper kind of love in the face of misfortune and wrinkles. Quite improbable, but delightfully sentimental and imaginative."

"Put not your faith in princes, Brummell," quoted Mr. Sheridan, knowingly, "that your days may be longer in the land."

"A combination of scriptural sayings worthy of their most unrespected quoter," laughed Mrs. FitzHerbert. "Do you think a prince's passion could face wrinkles?"

"In whose face? His own or some one else's?"

"Some one else's face, of course, Mr. Sheridan."

"I spoke of the proper kind of love, dear madame, not the improper," observed Brummell, languidly.

"And a prince's love?"

"For his princess impossible, for any other woman improper," said Sheridan, looking away lest his shot strike home.

"And why has Sir Percival cut Mr. Moore?" demanded Mrs. FitzHerbert, giving Sheridan a reproving tap with her fan.

"They are old rivals," replied the Beau.

"Would Sir Percival marry her, do you think?"

"No one can answer that question, Mrs. Fitz, but Lovelace himself. Shall I tell him you would like to know?"

"Not for the world, Mr. Sheridan," she exclaimed. "It is not my affair."

"If Percy is contemplating matrimony it will surprise many who know him well," returned Brummell, seating himself near by. "But then he always was an eccentric dog."

"They would never agree."

"Well," said Mr. Sheridan, "it is well known that if the bride and the groom did not have their little differences they would not care to marry."

"Ahem! Have you read Mr. Rogers's new poem?" asked the lady, skilfully changing the subject.

"'The Pleasures of Memory'? Egad, I obtain much more pleasure by forgetting," said Sheridan, taking snuff.

"So the tradesmen say, Sherry."

"Well, George, I've not heard of your discounting your bills lately," retorted the elder man.

Just then Sir Percival approached them.

"As usual, the rallying place for wit and fashion is at Mrs. FitzHerbert's side," said the baronet, graciously.

"So you thought you would add beauty to the list by coming yourself?"

"Nay, Sherry, I have heard it said there was never a prettier gentleman than Richard Brinsley," said the baronet.

"Who said that? Your grandmother?" retorted Sheridan. "How is the old lady?"

"So you have neglected Mr. Moore?" whispered Mrs. FitzHerbert, drawing her host to her side. "Oh, Percy, Percy, what a jealous creature you are!"

"Egad, you wrong me, Mrs. FitzHerbert; the one being I have ever really envied as a lover is his Highness."

"Mr. Dyke and Mistress Dyke," announced the footman.

Sir Percival went to welcome his guests, followed by Sheridan and the others. Bessie never looked prettier. The proud consciousness of her success gave her a new confidence, and she laughed and quizzed it with the witty throng assembled to celebrate her triumph as brightly and merrily as though she had never moved in any but the upper circle of society. Mrs. FitzHerbert mischievously told her of Sir Percival's intentional neglect of Moore in the hearing of the gentleman, and then, bubbling over with glee at the embarrassing position in which she had placed him, sought safety in flight on the arm of Farrell, who, quite dazzled by the beauty's condescension, was already vaguely meditating on his chances as a rival of the Regent.

"Are you angry, Mistress Bessie?" asked Sir Percival, inwardly registering a vow to be even with the Prince's favorite for the trick she had played him.

"Angry?" she repeated. "What a question, sir!

Surely in your own house you have the privilege of editing your visiting list?"

"You must know why I have done this," he said boldly.

"Why, Sir Percival?"

"Because I am jealous of the amorous looks he bestows upon you, even if you do not return them. I wished to have you to myself to-night, so I have placed it beyond Moore's power to interfere in his usual impudent manner."

"You need not explain," Bessie said coldly, as a servant approached.

"The Prince's carriage blocks the way," he announced to his master.

"Good!" exclaimed Sir Percival. "His Highness' tardiness worried me. I was afraid he was not coming."

"His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales," announced the footman a moment later, "*and Mr. Thomas Moore!*"

The Regent entered the room with his arm linked in that of the poet, whose eyes, twinkling with merriment, showed plainly his enjoyment of Sir Percival's surprise and disappointment.

"Percy, I took the liberty of bringing Tom Moore with me."

"Your Highness does not doubt that I am glad to welcome any friend of yours," glibly replied Sir Percival.

Then as the Prince, seeing Sheridan, ever a favorite of his, turned away, the baronet said to Moore, a sneer disfiguring his handsome face:

"Believe me, Mr. Moore, my house is honored."

"I believe you, Sir Percival," responded the poet, promptly, "so that need not worry you."

"Nothing ever worries me, sir."

"Not even conscience, Sir Percival?"

"No, Mr. Moore," replied the baronet, as Wales and Sheridan drew nearer.

"Ah, I see, conscience, like a powdered wig, is no longer in style."

"Tut, tut, Tom," said Sheridan reprovingly. "I still cling to the old fashion."

Moore eyed the speaker's wig with tolerant eye.

"Faith, Sherry," said he, "brains such as yours are an excuse for anything."

"Perhaps," said Sheridan. "But it is a poor rule that does n't work both ways, and surely you will not have the temerity to assert that 'Anything is an excuse for brains.'"

"In society who can doubt the truth of the statement?"

"It takes a sinner to be cynical," said Sheridan, having recourse to his snuff-box.

"Then," said Moore, "what a doubter our greatest dramatist must be."

"I have been described as a doubtful character more than once," returned the old gentleman. "Your Highness, when you arrived we were discussing matrimony."

"An amatory eccentricity," drawled Brummell, who had joined the little group now surrounding the Prince.

"The connecting link between bankruptcy and the Bank of England," declared Sir Percival.

"The straight-jacket in which are confined couples

suffering from sentimental insanity pronounced incurable by the church," said Moore.

"Ah," said Wales, "recovery is sometimes rapid, nevertheless."

"Marriage is deceptive," said Mr. Sheridan, with a sigh. "Lovers go to church for a bridal and return home to find they have been given a yoke."

"What would you suggest, Sherry?" asked the Prince. "Would you abolish matrimony?"

"I 'd make it a bill drawn on Divorce at say three years' sight."

"I fear most couples would seek to discount the bill," said Moore.

"You take it too seriously," said Brummell, smothering a yawn.

"Is it supposed to be a joke?" asked Wales, whimsically.

"Yes, your Highness, played on mankind for the benefit of posterity," said Moore.

"Tut, tut, Tommy," said Sheridan reprovingly. "You are too young to be such a scoffer."

"Indeed?"

"You young fellows are led astray by your own importance, and soon begin to regard yourselves as paternal achievements rather than maternal miscalculations."

A roar followed this sally of the elder Irishman, but the younger was not to be so quickly defeated.

"And you old boys," said he, "make another mistake. You regard yourselves as attractions long after you have become ornaments."

"Personalities are to be avoided," returned Sheridan good-humoredly. "We were talking of marriage."

"Don't mention it," retorted Moore politely. "It is a queer thing at best. Before a wedding a woman has a husband to look forward to."

"And when married?"

"Faith, Sherry, a husband to look after."

"Imagine it, Brummell."

"Fortunately, your Highness, there are some limits to my imagination," replied the Beau.

"Sentimentally but not sartorially speaking," observed Sheridan, scrutinizing the exquisite's lace cravat through his eye-glass. "'T is well to remember that imagination is the thief of truth."

"You have dismembered marriage," said Wales, smiling, "what of love?"

"Surely the subjects have nothing in common?" cried Moore.

"The two together would be most uncommon," remarked Sheridan. "Love is the incidental music in the melodrama of life."

"The sugar coating put upon the pill of sensuality by the sentimental apothecary," retorted Moore. "Love is the devil, matrimony is hel — hem! — heaven."

"How do you know, Moore?" demanded the Prince. "You have never been married."

"I have never been to Hades, your Highness, but I know it is hot just the same."

The verbal duel of the quartette ended in a shout of laughter and the Prince, on the arm of Brummell, strolled away in search of Mrs. FitzHerbert, while Sir Percival and Sheridan sought the card-room, leaving Moore to his own devices, a proceeding that suited him exactly, as he had already caught a distant view of Bessie, and was eager to be off in pursuit.

That young lady, guessing as much, took refuge in a flight as skilful as it was apparently unstudied, and Moore, hampered by the politeness he was compelled to bestow upon his friends and admirers as he encountered them on his pursuing stroll, found himself at the end of half an hour no nearer the object of his quest than at the beginning of the evening. Just then there came a request from the Regent that he should favor the assemblage with one of his own songs, so, inwardly chafing at the delay, he was compelled to warble rapturously, not once but thrice, for his good-nature was at par with his fellow guests' appreciation.

Having sung "Believe Me, if All Those Endearing Young Charms," he followed it with the mournful ditty, "She is Far from the Land," and finished with "The Last Rose of Summer" by royal command, the close of his efforts being received with a perfect storm of applause that was as sincere as it was flattering; but here the Prince interfered, and, vowing he would not allow his gifted friend to strain his vocal cords, publicly thanked Moore for the pleasure he had given the assemblage.

Meanwhile, Sir Percival had not been idle. Finding a deserted nook the baronet, about an hour later, sent a servant in quest of Farrell, and contentedly awaited the young Irishman's coming, absorbed in pleasant rumination on the probable happenings of the by no means distant future.

"Oh, Terence," said he, rousing from his reverie as the former entered, "is the poem printed?"

Farrell drew a copy of the *Examiner* from his pocket.

"Here it is in the evening's issue," said he. "Evi-

TOM MOORE MEETS BESSIE DYKE AT SIR PERCIVAL'S.

dently his Highness has not yet stumbled on it, though every one else seems to have done so."

"Droll that the Prince should come here in the author's company," said Sir Percival, scanning the sheet, in the corner of which was the poem he had purloined from Moore's garret.

"A propitious happening, sir," returned Farrell. "I have not begun the circulation of the author's name. Is it the proper time, think you?"

"Not yet, my dear Terence. Half an hour from now will be quite soon enough. Egad, these verses sting, or I 'm no judge of satire. When the Prince does finally set eyes upon them there will be an outburst. A flood of anger will result on which the writer of this masterpiece will be borne away to oblivion."

"Moore is high in favor now."

"The higher the elevation the greater the fall, Terence."

Farrell nodded.

"Our visit to his garret was a fortunate one. But for what we found there I fear Tom's position in royal favor would be too firm for even you, Sir Percival, to successfully assail. May I ask the programme you have planned in regard to Bessie?"

"It differs very little from the scheme we discussed a fortnight ago. Already the bailiffs are on post both at the front and rear, waiting patiently to seize the person of Mr. Dyke unless otherwise directed by my humble self, which will only result from the girl's compliance or the payment of the thousand her father owes me. I anticipate with their aid finding little difficulty in persuading Mistress Bessie to go through the mar-

riage ceremony to-night. Once this is accomplished I'll take her on the Continent for a glimpse of Europe."

"You will marry her?" said Farrell in surprise.

"Not really, you fool," laughed his patron. "Foreseeing such a compromise as marriage, I have provided a clergyman of my own manufacture. Jack Hathaway has kindly consented to assume the rôle for a liberal consideration."

"That devil's bird," muttered Farrell.

"Aye, no angel child is Jack, but a gentler rogue might not care to risk liberty to oblige a friend who had found a difficult damsel."

"And where is this gallant rascal?"

"He, with the proper ecclesiastical caparisons ready at hand, is waiting for my coming round the corner a little way. You see how confident I am that to-night I will have my will."

"You think she will suspect nothing?"

"I rely on Jack's appearance to silence any vague doubts that may haunt her gentle bosom. Jack can look most reverent. Aye, and act it, too, if he be not in his cups."

"You are a remarkable man, Sir Percival."

"At all events industrious," returned the baronet, rising and putting the paper in his pocket. "Come, Farrell, our absence may be remarked. Your arm."

Then, as these two very worthy gentlemen strolled leisurely away, a little old man in a powdered wig all awry in its set upon his clever old head, staggered out from behind the portières screening the window recess, and, balancing himself uncertainly as he stood, groaned aloud at the impotence of his intoxicated brain.

The little gentleman was Mr. Richard Brinsley

Sheridan; the reason for his sudden impatience with drunkenness being that he had heard every word of the conversation between Sir Percival and his creature, and now found his wine-drenched intellect unequal to planning the proper course for him to follow to checkmate the benevolent intentions of his host.

Chapter Nineteen

MR. SHERIDAN, MR. BRUMMELL, AND MR. MOORE HOLD COUNCIL OF WAR

HIS Royal Highness did not at first succeed in locating the lady who enjoyed so much of his favor and admiration at this time. Mrs. FitzHerbert took possession of Moore when a servant informed Farrell of Sir Percival's wish to see him, and, laughing mischievously, kept on the move from one room to another, resolved that Wales should make at least a fairly determined effort before he obtained the pleasure of her company. Finding a secluded corner behind some palms in the conservatory, she proceeded to catechise Moore in regard to his affair with Bessie Dyke, at the same time keeping a sharp look-out for the approach of the Regent.

"I 'll vow you were at Old Drury to-night, Mr. Moore," said she.

"Do you think that shows marvellous perception on your part?" demanded the poet, lightly.

"What do you think of actresses?"

"I don't think of them, Mrs. FitzHerbert."

"Not of Bessie?"

"Never as an actress."

"Yet she is one, and clever too."

"If I had my way she 'd never walk the boards after to-night."

"But you have n't your way, Mr. Moore."

"Worse luck!"

"Oh, perhaps it is fortunate for Mistress Bessie that you do not direct her destinies."

"I think no man enjoys seeing a woman he cares for upon the stage."

"Fie, Mr. Moore. A man should be proud of the admiration accorded her if she be successful."

"There is no place half so fitting for a woman as her husband's home. No profession for her one hundredth part so appropriate, so complete in happiness and content as the care of her children."

"You are very old fashioned, Mr. Moore."

"True love is always old fashioned. It is one thing that has never changed an iota since the first man was given the first woman to worship."

"Oh, dear," sighed Mrs. FitzHerbert, "you have the morals badly this evening. Mr. Brummell, I fear your friend Tom is contemplating priesthood."

"Religion is an excellent thing to ponder on," said the Beau, drawing near. "It is so completely non-exciting that much thought may be expended, thus furnishing extensive intellectual exercise without causing the nervous mental activity so completely demoralizing to placid natures."

"Perhaps he means something by that procession of words, Mrs. FitzHerbert," said Moore, doubtfully. "We must not judge entirely by appearances."

"It is not impossible, I presume," replied Mrs. Fitz-Herbert, apparently possessed of serious misgivings upon the subject.

"Because the prattle of certain people is entirely devoid of either sense or sentiment, it is not to be concluded that the conversation of every one else is at so completely a low ebb of mentality," remarked the Beau, sententiously. "Oh, Tommy, Tommy, why will you tie your cravat in that horrible, horrible fashion?"

"It 's like this, Brummell. I 'm tired of following your styles, so at present seek to set one of my own."

"Then I 'll quell your insubordination without further delay," returned the Beau, laying skilful hands on Moore's tie. "A touch to the left, a twist to the right, a pucker here, and a graceful fall of lace thus, Thomas, and you are a credit to Ireland."

"Thanky," said Moore. "If I look half as fine as you do, George, I 'll need some one to see me home. The ladies will never allow me to escape unkissed."

"A kiss in time saves nine," said Mr. Sheridan, thickly, having approached unnoticed. "I can't prove it, but it sounds curst clever, at least after the second bottle."

"Oh, by the way, Mrs. Fitz," said Brummell, languidly, "his Highness is searching for you, or I misread his behavior."

"If that is the case," replied Mrs. FitzHerbert, smiling into existence the prettiest dimple in the world, "there is only one thing for me to do."

"To hide, Mrs. FitzHerbert," suggested Moore, who understood all women save one; at least it was to this effect that he flattered himself.

"Really, Mr. Moore, you should have been born a woman."

"Not so," said the poet, "for then, like other women,

I should be blind to the good fortune of his Highness in enjoying your ladyship's favor."

"But," said Brummell, pompously, "if you had been a woman, Tom, *I* might have loved you."

"Egad, George, for the first time in my life I regret my sex."

"I 've regretted m' sex all m' life," observed Sheridan, swaying a trifle.

"And tried to drown all recollection in a crimson tide, eh, Sherry?"

"Don't you be so f'miliar, Tommy. I 'm not half drunk."

"Which half is sober, sir?"

"I am still in doubt 's to that, sir. I think it 's first one half and then the other."

"You seem quite content, Mr. Sheridan."

"That, Mrs. FitzHerbert, is because I have made myself familiar with Sir Percival's wine, and familiarity breeds content."

Just then Mrs. FitzHerbert caught a distant view of the Regent, and, seeing Sheridan was bent on continuing to enjoy the society of his young fellow-countryman, she took the arm of the Beau and hied herself in the opposite direction, thus prolonging the quest of her royal lover.

Once by themselves, Sheridan seized Moore's arm.

"Tommy," said he, "I 'm a drunken old reprobate."

"They say confession is good for the soul, Sherry," replied Moore, politely.

"But I 'm not such a rascal as s'm' others I know of."

"I hope you mean nothing personal?"

"Shut up, Tommy."

"Yessir," replied the gentleman thus admonished.

"Goo' boy, Tommy. Now listen. Having had a drink or two or pos'bly three to be 'tirely frank, Tommy, I 'cided to get a little air."

"I thought you had a little heir, Sherry."

"Y'r a fool, Tommy."

"I can't conscientiously deny it."

"Oh, H—l!" remarked the elder Irishman, "it 's too important to be so curst silly about."

"I beg your pardon," said Moore, contritely. "Proceed."

"Where was I?"

"You were looking for air."

"So I was. Well, so in I go to a room ver' little frequented. And there I raise a window and have a shock, fo' outside I see quite plainly the ugly mug of a bailiff. A bailiff I 'm quite attached to f'r ole times' sake. 'Shoo' old acquaintance be f'rgot,' and so forth. Understan', Tommy?"

"Perfectly."

"So of course I think he is after me. Understan'?"

"The presumption is quite natural."

"And bob back my head f'r fear he mi' see me. Then down comes window on m' crown, tips my wig over m' ear, and lays me out cold on the floor behind the por'chers. Understan'?"

"Very clearly, Sherry."

"Then when I become sens'ble, I hear voices outside window recess in the room, Sir Percival and Farrell having confidential chat. Thass what I want tell you."

"Oh," said Moore, in sudden interest, "what were they talking about?"

"Curst 'f I know now," said the dramatist, blankly,

all recollection of the important information he had to convey suddenly obliterated.

Moore immediately waxed anxious.

"Think, Sherry, think!"

"I 'm too drunk to do anything but —"

"But what?"

"— but drink some more drinksh."

"Sit down here now and take things easily," urged Moore, resolved to learn what had weighed so heavily upon the old gentleman's mind.

"I 'm ver' thirsty," observed Sheridan, thoughtfully. "Go' lump on m' head, Tommy. Ver' dis'oblegin' window, most inconsid'rate. Almost scalped ven'rable author of 'Schoo' f'r Scan'al.'"

"Now there are only two subjects on which Sir Percival could converse that would interest me in the least, Sherry."

"Two. Thass ver' few f'r so clever a man as you, Tommy. I fear you lack ver' — ver' — vers'tility, m' boy."

"The first subject is, of course, Bessie."

"Curst nice lil' girl," observed Sheridan, conscious that the young lady spoken of was in some way connected with the idea that had so suddenly vanished.

"The other is myself."

"Natura — er — rally so."

"Now of which of these did he speak?"

"Thass the question, Tommy," replied Sheridan stupidly.

"Oh!" exclaimed Moore in disgust.

A flash of recollection stirred into new life by the ejaculation illumined the face of the wit.

"Yesh, thass it. Owe. Thass it, Tommy."

Moore became imbued with new hope, but did not hasten his inquiries as before, lest he should again daze Sheridan's semi-somnolent memory.

"Owe?" he repeated. "Some one is indebted to Sir Percival, Sherry?"

"Thass it, Tommy."

"I wonder who it can be? Of course you do not remember, Sherry?"

"Yesh I do," asserted his companion. "Itsh Mr. Dyke. He owes Sir Percival thoushand pounds."

"Good God!" exclaimed Moore, beneath his breath, horrified at what he heard.

"The bailiffs I s'posed present in m' honor are here to seize him if he don't return the moneysh to-night."

"What is the alternative the scoundrel offers?" asked Moore, confident that the debt was merely a weapon of intimidation.

"If Bessie marries him to-night he will let her father off on his debt. Otherwise he goes in limbo. She 'll have to do it, m' boy. He 'd die in Fleet Street. Oh, Tommy, what a dirty scoundrel he ish!"

"Sherry," said Moore, gratefully, pressing the old gentleman's hand as he spoke, "if I live to be a thousand years old I 'll never cease to thank you with all my heart for what you have done to-night."

"Thass all right, Tommy, thass all right. We 're both Irishmen," responded the dramatist.

As Sheridan spoke he opened the window and standing beside it drew long draughts of the cool fresh evening air into his lungs. Moore sat quietly waiting for his friend to regain the sobriety he knew would not be long in returning, now that he had passed through the muddled stage and emerged upon the

borders of ordinary intelligence. Meanwhile he was trying to evolve some plan to avert the danger threatening his friends with such dire misfortune. For the aged poet to languish in the foulness of a debtor's prison for more than a week would be to sign his death-warrant. The horrible condition of the places of confinement consecrated to the incarceration of gentlemen who involved themselves to an extent beyond their ability to pay was one of the strongest inducements that could be brought to bear by a creditor to force to the settlement of long-standing obligations a certain type of debtor — he who could pay if he willed to make the sacrifice of personal convenience, and to curtail the indulgences common usage made the essential pleasures of the gay life of the sporty young buck of the period. For this reason more than any other was the condition of these vile dens allowed to go unimproved in spite of an occasional vigorous protest from some noble but impoverished family whose ne'er-do-well offspring was compelled to lie indefinitely in squalor as new as it was repugnant to his elegant sensibilities. That Bessie would make any sacrifice to keep her father from such a fate Moore felt assured. There was only one way to block Sir Percival's game. The money must be paid. But how? The returns from Moore's book had enabled him to settle his debts in both Ireland and England, but, up to this time, very little more than enough to accomplish this result and support him as his new position demanded had come from his publisher, McDermot. It was true that the sudden glow of enthusiasm usually experienced by a bookseller after the publication of a successful book had led the close-fisted and stony-

hearted old Scotchman to declare his willingness to pay a generous sum in advance for a new poem, upon an oriental theme, which Lord Lansdowne had suggested to Moore, providing this bonus should give him the exclusive right of publication for the term of two years to all literary output from the pen of the young Irishman. However, Moore felt confident that the sum McDermot would be willing to pay to bind the bargain would be far less than the thousand he required. How, then, could he raise such an enormous amount?

Sheridan, who was fast sobering, thanks to the bracing air, closed the window with a shiver and turned to his young friend.

"What will you do, Tommy?" he asked, only a slight trace of his former thickness of tongue perceptible.

"Do, Sherry? I 'll have to raise the money."

"Have you it?" demanded the wit, regarding Moore in amazement.

"Not I, Sherry. It 's taken all I 've earned so far to pay my debts."

"Debts?" snorted Sheridan, contemptuously. "Let this be a lesson to you, Tom. Never pay anything. I never do."

"You, Sherry? Have you any money?"

"None, except what I have in my pockets," replied Sheridan, hopelessly. At this moment Mr. Brummell, deserted by Mrs. FitzHerbert, and weary of the senseless gabble so liberally dispensed by nine of every ten females gracing social functions of magnitude, wandered back into the conservatory in search of quiet. Spying two of his closest cronies, he made haste to join them.

"Here is the Beau," said Moore. "Ah, George, you have come just in time for the collection."

"Indeed?" said Brummell, curiously. "Have I missed the sermon?"

"Yes, but you are in time for the blessing, if you have any money to lend a poor devil of an Irishman."

"Money," sighed the Beau, "is too vulgar for me to long endure its possession, Tom."

"I am not joking, Brummell," declared Moore, seriously. "I need money, sir. Every penny you can let me have. How much do you think you can raise for me within the hour?"

Brummell, assured by Moore's manner that he was not jesting, began to sum up his resources.

"I think," said he, hopefully, "that I can borrow fifty pounds from my landlady, and I have a guinea or two in my clothes."

"Fifty pounds," said Moore. "And you, Sherry?"

The gentleman addressed had ransacked his pockets and was rapidly counting out a handful of small coins.

"I have five shillings and sixpence," he announced.

Moore groaned.

"And I think," continued the old gentleman, "that I can borrow five pounds from my valet if the rascal is not in a state of beastly sobriety."

"And I've not twenty pounds to my name," said Moore, losing hope for the moment.

"Your name should carry more weight than twenty pounds," returned Sheridan. "Perhaps I can borrow some from a stranger."

"But a stranger would not know you, Sherry," objected Brummell.

"But if he knew him he wouldn't lend him a penny,"

said Moore. "Think of it, gentlemen. What would posterity say if it knew? Beau Brummell, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and Tom Moore together cannot raise one hundred pounds in a time of desperate need."

"What would posterity say?" sighed Brummell in disgust.

"Oh, d—n posterity!" cried Sheridan. "What has posterity ever done for us?"

"Give it time, Sherry, give it time."

"That is one thing I am never short of, Tommy."

"May I, without impropriety, ask what is the trouble?" inquired the Beau.

"A friend of mine is in danger, Brummell. I must raise one thousand pounds before dawn."

"A thousand pounds!" exclaimed Brummell, horrified. "Good Lord!"

Then, as the Beau had recourse to his scent-bottle for the stimulation necessary to revive him from the shock inflicted by Moore's words, the poet gripped Sheridan by the arm in sudden hope.

"I 'll appeal to the Prince Regent himself, Sherry."

Sheridan shook his head in dissent.

"Tommy, boy, remember he is Sir Percival's intimate friend."

"But his Highness likes me. Surely he would interfere?"

"Tom," said Brummell solemnly, "if there is a woman in the case do not waste your time and exhaust the patience of Wales. His Highness is a greater rake than Percy Lovelace ever dreamed of being."

"He would not see a woman so coerced," persisted Moore.

"Remember, lad," advised Sheridan, "you are a

friend and courtier of only three months' standing. Sir Percival has been Wales's companion since their boyhood."

"Then God help us," said Moore in despair. "There is nothing I can do. Stay! I forgot McDermot. He has asked me to write him an eastern romance in verse and offered to pay liberally in advance."

"That old skinflint will faint at the thought of a thousand pounds."

"It is my only chance, Sherry. Where is the old fellow?"

"I saw him in the smoking-room a few minutes ago," said Brummell. "No doubt you will find him still there."

"I 'll not lose a moment," said Moore. "It is a forlorn hope, but he 'll find the hardest task of his life will be to give me 'No' for an answer."

"But first, Tom," said Sheridan, wisely, "you must see Mr. Dyke. Perhaps it is not so bad a matter as we think."

"You are right, Sherry," replied Moore, his spirits recovering a little at the thought that, after all, the danger might have been exaggerated.

But this desperate hope was not destined to be of long life, for Moore found Mr. Dyke in a quiet nook, crushed and despairing. He had just left Sir Percival, who in a few cold words had explained to the hapless old man the terrible trap in which he had been caught.

"Take a half hour to think over my proposition," the baronet had said as he left the aged poet. "When that time has passed, acquaint your daughter with my wishes. She will do anything, even marry me, I feel sure, to extricate you from your present predicament."

Moore listened in silence to his friend's story, and when he had finished said:

"You have not told Bessie, sir?"

"Not yet, Thomas."

"Then do not tell her. Let me settle with Sir Percival. I 'll find some way to beat him yet."

Leaving Mr. Dyke where he had found him, Moore went in search of the publisher.

Chapter Twenty

TOM MOORE MAKES A BAD BARGAIN

MR. McDERMOT raised his bald head as Moore approached him in the smoking-room. His keen, hatchet-shaped face was framed on either side by a huge mutton-chop whisker which was like nothing else half so much as a furze bush recently sifted over by a snow-storm. This worthy gentleman regarded Moore with a keenness that seemed to the poet to penetrate and to coldly scrutinize his troubled mind, for Moore was ever a poor hand at dissimulation and bore on his unusually cheery countenance only too plainly the mark of the mental anxiety he was now enduring.

"Weel, Mr. Moore, what can I do for ye, sair?"

"Sir," said Moore, trying to hide his eagerness, "I have been thinking over the proposition you made a week ago at the instigation of Lord Lansdowne."

"Weel, Mr. Moore?" repeated McDermot, realizing at a single glance that the person addressing him was much in need of something he hoped to obtain as the result of this interview, and wisely concluding that this something was money.

"You wished me to write a long poem, for which you asserted you were willing to pay in advance, if

by so doing you secured the exclusive right to all my work for the next two years."

"So I said, Mr. Moore, but that was a week ago, sair. However, continue your remarks."

"At that time I did not regard the matter favorably," continued Moore, "but since then I have changed my mind. I accept your offer, sir."

"Ah, do ye? And what terms did I propose, Mr. Moore?"

"You named none, sir, but from the way you spoke I fancied you would be agreeable to any reasonable bargain I might propose."

"True, sair, true, but what is reasonable in one man's eyes may weel be considered exhorbitant by anither. Ha' the kindness to name in figures, Mr. Moore, what ye deem ye due."

McDermot spoke in his most chilling tones, indifference ringing its baleful note in each word. Moore's heart sank, but he struggled bravely on with his hopeless task, resolved not to even acknowledge the possibility of defeat until failure absolute and crushing should be forced upon him beyond all denying.

"I have decided to ask one thousand pounds in advance, sir," he began, intending to name the royalty he hoped to be paid upon each copy of the poem sold, but the look he received from the grim old Scotchman made him hesitate and falter with the words upon his lips unspoken.

"One thousand poonds!" ejaculated McDermot, terribly shocked, if the tone in which he spoke could be regarded as a truthful indication of his feelings. "One thousand poonds, Mr. Moore? What jest is this, sair?"

"Is it not worth it?" stammered Moore, the blood rushing to his face.

"Worth it? *Worth it?* You must be mad, sair. No publisher half sane would dream o' paying ye half that in advance."

"Oh, come now," said Moore, trying to speak unconcernedly, and scoring a wretched failure as a result.

"I too ha' been considering the matter o' which ye speak, Mr. Moore."

"You mean you wish to withdraw your offer, sir?" cried Moore, in great alarm.

"That, Mr. Moore, is preecisely what I mean," declared McDermot, regarding the poet from beneath his bristling brows. "I ha' decided, sair, that I much exaggerated ye popularity as well as ye talents. This determination, taken togither with the terms ye ha' just suggested, leads me to wash my hands o' the whole matter. Find some ither pooblisher, Mr. Moore. Try Longmans or Mooray."

"Mr. McDermot," said Moore, forcing himself to speak calmly, thankful that the publisher and he had the smoking-room to themselves, "if the proposition I have made is unsatisfactory, pray suggest one in your turn. I will consider any you may see fit to offer."

McDermot coughed a little and shook his shining old head. That Moore was in desperate need of money was quite evident. The wily old publisher had no intention of allowing the most promising young poet of the day to slip through his fingers, yet he was quite resolved to take advantage of his extremity to drive him to as desperate a bargain as could be obtained

by the craft which forty years of business life had endowed him with in addition to his natural astuteness.

"No," said he, "I 'll not haggle wi' ye. No doubt there are ithers who will gi' ye what ye ask."

This last was said in a way that plainly stated his sincere conviction that no one else would even consider the matter.

"Oh, sir!" cried Moore, despairingly, "I have relied upon this bargain."

"No fault o' mine, Mr. Moore, no fault o' mine, sair."

"Do you think I would ask you to reconsider your words if I had any hope of obtaining the money in any other quarter?"

"Where is Lord Brooking? He should help ye if ye ask him."

"Lord Brooking is on the Continent."

"Really, Mr. Moore, ye accomplish nothing by this perseestance."

"Have you no heart, Mr. McDermot?"

"Weel, it has no voice in my business affairs, sair."

"If you will give me one thousand pounds to-night and three hundred more during the year you shall own and publish all that I write these two years."

"No, no, Mr. Moore."

"One hundred during the year and the thousand pounds to-night, sir."

"Let us end this useless discussion," snarled McDermot, rising from the easy chair he had occupied until now.

"No," cried Moore, "you shall not deny me. I 'll give you a bargain you cannot refuse, sir. Give

me one thousand pounds which shall be payment in full for the long poem, and I will write when and how you will for the next year at your own price. Yes, I will do this and bless you for it. Oh, sir, it means more than life to me. It is my whole future. It 's love, it 's honor. I beg that you will not use my extremity to drive me to despair. Surely my work is worth as much as it was a week ago when you would have gladly accepted such terms as I offer you now?"

"That is not the question," replied McDermot, coldly. "Ha' the goodness to get out o' my way, Mr. Moore."

Moore seized the publisher by the arm.

"An old man's liberty, perhaps his life; the happiness and good name of a mere girl depend upon me, sir. I have no other way of raising the money. Have pity."

"I am sorry," began McDermot in cold, merciless tones, but he got no farther.

"Then dictate your own terms, sir. I must have one thousand pounds. For that sum I will bind myself to anything you may propose."

"Ye mean that, Mr. Moore?"

"I do, sir."

"For one thousand poonds ye will gi' me, *without further compensation,* the entire literary labor o' your life, sair? All that ye may write so long as ye live, Mr. Moore?"

"Is that the best you will offer me?"

"That 's all, sair."

"I accept your terms," said Moore in a choking voice.

McDermot sat down at a desk near by and wrote out the check for the desired amount.

Moore, accompanied by Mr. Sheridan, went in search of Sir Percival armed with the check made payable to the order of the baronet by Mr. McDermot, who immediately after drawing it went home to bed, entirely satisfied with his evening's work.

The two Irishmen found Sir Percival idly chatting with Mr. Walter Scott and that gentleman's most intimate friend, Mr. Samuel Rogers, these two giants being as usual surrounded by a circle of the lesser lights in the world of literature. Their host, seeing that his company was evidently desired, excused himself to his other guests, and the trio withdrew to a secluded corner of the room.

"Sir Percival," said Moore, in reply to the baronet's inquiring glance, "I have been informed by my friend, Mr. Dyke, that he is indebted to you for the amount of one thousand pounds."

Sir Percival allowed an expression of gentle surprise to play over his clever face.

"It is quite true, Mr. Moore, but really I fail to see how the transaction concerns you in the least."

"Perhaps your comprehension of the affair in its entirety is quite as unnecessary as you seem to regard the interest I feel in the matter," replied Moore, taking the same key as his host.

"Will you pardon me if I ask the business in regard to which you wish to see me?"

"Certainly, Sir Percival, I desire you to give Mr. Dyke a receipt for one thousand pounds."

"Tut, tut!" said the baronet, as though slightly

irritated by the apparent silliness of Moore's request. "I shall do nothing of the sort unless I am paid in full."

"Allow me to pay you, sir. Here are a thousand pounds."

Sir Percival took the check from Moore, for once astonished out of his usually indifferent demeanor.

"The devil!" said he.

"Yes, a publisher," replied Moore, with a wink at Sheridan. "Kindly write me out a receipt, Sir Percival. Sherry, you will witness this transaction?"

"Faith, that I will gladly," said the dramatist, regarding Sir Percival's discomfiture with a humorous twinkle in his keen old eyes. "Damme, this is really a joyous occasion for all concerned."

To say that Sir Percival was surprised would be but to feebly express the feelings of that gentleman when he received payment of the debt which he had fondly hoped would be sufficient to gain his ends with Mistress Bessie. However, quickly rallying from his momentary discomposure, he put the check in his pocket.

"Believe me, gentlemen, I receive this with pleasure," said he, scribbling off a receipt with pen and ink brought by a servant.

"Yes, I know how pleased you are," replied Moore, politely. Then taking the acknowledgment of liquidation from the baronet, he carefully folded it before depositing it in his wallet.

"Some day, Sir Percival, when the time comes for us to make a settlement, I shall ask you for my receipt," he said in a tone that there was no mistaking.

"When that time comes, Mr. Moore, you will find

me as eager and prompt as yourself," replied Sir Percival.

Moore looked his enemy calmly in the face and read there a courage fully the equal of his own.

"Egad, Sir Percival," said he, "for once I believe you. No doubt you will find it in your heart to release the bailiffs from further attendance this evening?"

"Your suggestion is a good one, Mr. Moore," answered the baronet, smothering his rage. "Carry to Mr. Dyke my thanks and add one more to the list of the many kindnesses for which I am already indebted to you, sir."

Moore and Sheridan lost but little time in the exchange of social amenities with their discomfited host. The younger man sought the card-room, bent on forgetting, for a while at least, the slavery into which he had sold his pen; the elder picked up the temporarily abandoned thread of his intoxication without further delay.

Chapter Twenty-One

THE POET FALLS FROM FAVOR

ABOUT fifteen minutes elapsed before some zealous courtier brought the poem in the *Examiner* to the attention of the Regent, who thereupon, forgetting the presence of Mrs. FitzHerbert, who had allowed him to overtake her a few minutes previous, swore with an ease and variety that would have been a credit to the proverbial Billingsgate seller of fish. As the rage of Wales was not of the repressed order, the voice of royalty raised high in anger drew about him a crowd of courtiers who had been eagerly expecting such an outbreak all the evening.

"Sir Percival!" cried the Regent, catching sight of the baronet in a distant corner where Farrell and he were enjoying the tumult consequent on the culmination of their plot. "Have you seen this devilish set of verses?"

"I regret to say I have, your Highness," responded the baronet both shocked and grieved.

"It is infamous!" stormed Wales. "Gad's life! it is intolerable. I devote my best efforts to my country's service only to be foully lampooned in the public Press. Why, curse me — !"

"Your Highness, calm yourself, I beg of you," said Mrs. FitzHerbert, soothingly, but the Prince was not to be so easily restrained.

"Calm, indeed?" he shouted. "Calm, when such damnable insults are written and printed? Not I, madame."

"Rise superior to this malicious attack," persisted the beauty, little pleased that her influence should fail so publicly. "Remember your greatness, sir."

"A lion may be stung into anger by a gadfly, madame," retorted Wales, growing even more furious. "Brummell, have you read this infernal poem?"

"Not I, your Highness," replied the Beau, who, accompanied by Moore, had forsaken the card-table at the first outburst of royal wrath.

"Then do so now," commanded the enraged Regent, thrusting the paper into his hands.

Brummell ran his eyes hurriedly over the verses, while Wales continued pacing up and down the now crowded room in unabating fury.

"I saw them earlier in the evening, your Highness," said Sheridan, unable to keep his oar out of the troubled waters.

"Oh, did you, indeed?" demanded Wales. "And no doubt chuckled like the devil over them?"

"Your Highness!" said the aged wit, trying to speak reproachfully, in spite of an internal laugh that threatened to break out and ruin him.

"I believe you are quizzing me now if the truth were known," asserted the Prince, wrathfully suspicious. "If I am not mistaken, these lines sound marvellously like the work of your pen, sirrah."

"On my honor you wrong me, Sire," declared Sheridan, in a tone so unmistakably truthful that Wales could not doubt his entire innocence.

"May I not see the poem, Mr. Brummell?" asked Dyke, who had just entered the room.

The Beau obligingly handed over the paper to the old gentleman. As the old rhymer turned away, Moore looked over his shoulder and, scanning with eager eyes the page in quest of the satire which had so enraged the Regent, found it before the elder man's less keen sight had performed a like service for him. Moore turned sick with horror and clutched the nearest chair for support. How had the verses found their way into print? Dyke was ruined if it were proved that he wrote them. Bessie, too, would feel the weight of the Regent's displeasure, and without doubt would be deprived of her position at Drury Lane for her father's additional punishment. He had saved them from one disaster only to see them plunged hopelessly into another almost as dire.

A groan from the unhappy author announced that he, too, had recognized his poem. The next moment he turned on Moore with a look of despair on his usually placid face.

"Tom," he whispered, "you have ruined me. My poem is printed. Oh, Tom, how could you? How could you?"

"Surely you do not believe that I gave it to the Press?" said Moore, hoarsely, stung to the heart by the accusing look he read in his old friend's eyes.

"Who else could have done it? I gave you the only copy three months ago."

"I remember, sir. Ah, I can explain it. I left my garret in the afternoon and went for a stroll. When I returned home I found Sir Percival and Farrell there. Since that day I have never thought of it. They have done this, Mr. Dyke."

"I do not believe you," answered Dyke in a voice

so scornful and suspicious that Moore felt as though he had received a blow in the face.

Meanwhile Wales's anger had not cooled in the least.

"Egad!" he was saying, "if I but knew the author's name!"

"There is still a chance, Mr. Dyke," whispered Moore. "Deny all knowledge of the matter. Swear you did not write it if necessary."

"Is it impossible to learn the identity of the writer?" asked Brummell seriously.

"Impossible?" repeated Wales. "Of course it is impossible, Beau! You do not think he will acknowledge this slander as his own, do you?"

"It does seem unlikely," admitted the exquisite.

"So unlikely," snorted the Prince, "that I'd give a thousand pounds to find the rascal out."

Farrell, spurred on by a nudge from the elbow of his patron, stepped forward.

"Your Highness," said he, calmly, "I accept your offer."

Wales gazed at the dapper young law student in surprise.

"You know the author of this attack upon me, sir?" he asked.

"I do," answered Farrell, firmly.

Moore, resolved to anticipate and if possible prevent the accusation of Dyke which he felt sure was about to follow, stepped hurriedly forward.

"One moment, your Highness," said he. "Do you know this gentleman? He is a liar, a blackleg, and a coward, unworthy of your Highness' belief or consideration."

"Curse you," began Farrell, white to his lips with shame and passion, but Moore did not allow him to finish.

"I struck him in Ireland, yet he never resented my insult. Think, your Highness, is such a poltroon worthy of belief?"

"Sire!" stammered Farrell.

"Damn your private quarrels!" roared Wales, turning on Moore. "Have I not my own wrongs to resent, that you must annoy me with yours now?"

"He will lie to you as he has to others, Sire," replied Moore, refusing to be silenced.

"That remains to be seen, sirrah."

Sir Percival stepped out of the throng surrounding the angry Prince, smiling and debonair as usual.

"I will answer for the truth of any statement Mr. Farrell may make, Sire," said he.

"Continue," growled the Prince, waving Moore back with an impatient gesture.

"Your Highness," said Farrell, quick to take advantage of his opportunity, "the author of this vile attack upon you is one of your friends, a favorite protégé, who, owing all to your favor, thus rewards your kindness by base ingratitude. To your Highness he owes everything; thus he repays you."

"His name?" demanded Wales.

There was a moment's pause, during which silence reigned, as Farrell artfully hesitated in his reply that, thus delayed, it might fall with even more crushing effect upon the object of his hatred. Short as was the time, it sufficed for Moore. Convinced that this was the only opportunity which would be afforded him to

avert the disaster he believed to be about to overtake the father of the girl he had loved so truly and patiently, he resolved not to let it pass unutilized.

"I wrote that poem," he cried. "I am the author whose name your Highness would know."

"You, Moore?" gasped the Prince, astonished by what he had heard.

Dyke made a move forward, but Moore gripped his arm.

"For Bessie's sake," he whispered. "Now do you believe me?"

"But, Tom —"

"Hush, sir," said Moore, thrusting Sir Percival's receipt into Dyke's hand. "Read that, and be silent if you love your daughter."

Wales, pale with fury, had stood for a moment in utter silence. Then, as he recovered speech, his voice sounded hoarsely, but under perfect control.

"Sir Percival," he said slowly, "call a carriage for Mr. Moore."

Turning to Mrs. FitzHerbert, he offered her his arm, and with her at his side walked deliberately from the room. Sir Percival started toward the door, a triumphant smile upon his sneering mouth, but Moore stopped him, and for a moment the two stood face to face. Suddenly the desperate expression left the countenance of the poet, and he smiled as gayly as though he had just received from the Prince a mark of esteem instead of a disgraceful dismissal.

"You heard his Highness' order, my man?"

He seemed to be addressing a servant, if one could judge from the tone in which he spoke.

"Then call my carriage, *lackey!*"

"Lackey!" cried Sir Percival, red with rage at the insult, thus forced upon him.

"Aye, lackey," repeated Moore, defiant and sneering in his turn. *"And here is your pay!"*

As he spoke, he struck the baronet a stinging slap in the face; then turned and strolled elegantly from the room.

Thus it was that Mr. Thomas Moore quitted the world of Fashion, which but a scant three months before he had entered in triumph by grace of the favor of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

Book Four

"If every rose with gold were tied,
Did gems for dewdrops fall,
One faded leaf where love had sighed
Were sweetly worth them all."

Chapter Twenty-Two

TOM MOORE RECEIVES A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE

THE morning after his enforced but by no means inglorious departure from Sir Percival's house, Mr. Thomas Moore met his disgruntled host near the Serpentine in Hyde Park, but the duel was productive of little satisfaction to either of the parties concerned, as Moore, never having held a pistol in his hands before, missed his antagonist by at least ten feet, receiving in return a bullet that sang a melody new to him as it clipped its way through his hair. Sir Percival's honor was declared vindicated, as his having made a target of himself for Moore's shooting was considered to totally erase all stain put upon his personal character by the vigorous slap he had received from the poet.

Moore escaped unhurt, though minus a few locks of hair, — a loss which was not without significance as an indication of Sir Percival's good intentions. The young Irishman was naturally convinced that at this particular game he was no match for his sneering enemy, and considered himself lucky to have escaped with his life, an opinion that was shared by both Sir Percival and Terence Farrell, for the baronet was an expert marksman, and had never doubted that he would end all rivalry between himself and Moore with

the bullet he aimed at his opponent that morning. However, his opportunity to so rid himself of his rival had come and gone, for he was far too wise to endeavor to force another quarrel upon Moore, even though the latter had fallen from favor, for more than one harsh criticism was made on the unequal nature of their encounter. Sir Percival's skill was widely known, and a no less deservedly popular individual than Mr. Sheridan took pains to circulate the truth concerning Moore's shortcomings as a pistol shot. Even his Highness saw fit to remark to the baronet that it was "a demned one-sided affair," and that Sir Percival's reputation, had he killed Moore, might have become "even a little more unsavory," comments which led the latter to doubt the permanency of the poet's disgrace and exile, but, as he kept these suspicions to himself, by the world in general Tom Moore was considered a ruined man.

On returning from their meeting in Hyde Park in the early morning, Moore discreetly abandoned his comfortable apartments, and, in spite of the protests and lamentations of Mrs. Malone, resumed the occupancy of the shabby attic from which the Prince's kindness had a few months before rescued him.

"No," said Moore, determinedly, to his landlady. "I 'm out of favor now and I 'll be saving of my pennies till I 'm righted again, if that shall ever be, which God knows and I 'm ignorant of, worse luck."

Buster and Lord Castlereagh moved up the several flights between the poet's latest and earliest abiding-places with their master, and seemed actually glad to be back in their old quarters. Their cheerfulness could be easily accounted for. Rat-holes were an un-

known commodity on the first floor, though numerous in the attic, and the dignity of behavior Buster thought incumbent on him to assume in honor of rising fortune had proved irksome in the extreme to that worthy youth.

Leaving the lad to attend to the details of the removal, Moore, after signing his contract with McDermot, sought the soothing comforts of the country, as was his custom when in trouble, and hied himself to a little fishing village not far distant.

. . . . . .

One afternoon a week later Buster was seated in his favorite attitude, his chair tipped back on its rear legs and his feet, considerably higher than his head, supported by the table, idly contemplating the daily mail which had just been delivered.

There were only two letters. Up to the time of the withdrawal of Wales's favor, there were usually a score or so calling for the poet's inspection each day, but the reprimand of the week before had had immediate effect upon Moore's correspondence, and while numerous of his more intimate friends remained loyal throughout the whole period of his disgrace, there were many others only too prompt to show the utter shallowness of their pretence of regard by immediately abandoning him to what they believed would be permanent ruin.

One of the two letters in Buster's possession had a plump outline that seemed to indicate an inclosure of some bulk. This had the name of the *Gazette* printed upon it. Buster shook his head disgustedly. The size of the missive seemed ominous. The other letter was neutral in impression-giving. It might hold a check,

or it might announce the return of a manuscript under separate cover, but it certainly did possess possibilities.

Buster sighed and, as was his wont, addressed himself to the bulldog, who from the window was solemnly contemplating the passing throng on the street below.

"That 's a nice mile for a poet hof the maggietood hof Mr. Moore, haint it, your lordship? Cuss 'em, they thinks we is down to st'y, don't they? Well, we 'll show 'em a thing hor two before we gets through."

The bulldog regarded his master admiringly over his brawny shoulder, and switched his butt of a tail vigorously back and forth upon the floor. This manœuvre sent fluttering a bit of paper that lay near him, and Lord Castlereagh, becoming immediately persuaded that he had a butterfly within easy reach, leaped vigorously in pursuit.

"You 're a fool," remarked Buster, as the animal scuttled across the floor in delighted chase of the paper. Then, waxing philosophical, he continued, "Hit wuz hever thus. We wacks hup suthin' with hour tiles that flies, hand we thinks hit his fime and fortune, hand pursoos hit only to find hout we 'as bilked hourselves wid a kimming-reror hor fast fiding plant-has-me-goryer."

Absurdly satisfied with himself for having rid his mind of such important and many-jointed words successfully, Buster began to whistle, playing a merry tune more or less reminiscent of "Sally in Our Alley" on an instrument which his master had presented to him the first week of their acquaintance. This was none other than the whistle that Moore had made the

very afternoon on which he quarrelled with Bessie at the schoolhouse, — a bit of manufacturing he had often since regretted, for Buster had treasured it carefully, and was much given to using it for shrill improvisation, as well as careful rendition of the various airs then popular with the masses, finding it particularly adapted to the high notes of "The Last Rose of Summer," then in the heyday of its success.

Suddenly he felt his chair tip backward in a manner quite unwarranted by the care with which he was maintaining a delicate balance, and jumped to his feet with a loud yell, finding himself, when he turned, face to face with Mrs. Malone, who had entered unnoticed, the sound of her heavy tread being drowned by his melody.

"Fur goodness' sike!" he exclaimed wrathfully, "you must n't do sich rambunctious things, hole woman. You just scared me houter seven years' growth hand I can't hafford to lose no sich hamount."

"Niver mind thot," replied the landlady. "It 's many the fright you 've given me, you little tinker. Is Mr. Moore back from the country?"

"See 'ere, his n't the rent pide?" demanded Buster.

"Av course it 's paid," replied Mrs. Malone, scornfully. "D' ye t'ink I have no t'oughts at all but about me rint?"

"Well," confessed Buster, "once hupon a time, hit sorter looked has 'ow you wuz bestowing considerable medication hupon that topic. Hif hit did n't, bli' me, that 's hall, just bli' me."

"Is Mr. Moore back from the country?" repeated Mrs. Malone.

"Yes, your Majesty," replied the boy, with a low

obeisance. "'Ee his. 'Ee returned this werry noon from the 'onts hof nachoor."

"It is just a week since he wint away," observed Mrs. Malone, reflectively.

"'Ow does yer keep count?" asked Buster, surprised at the accuracy of her remark.

"Faith, thot's an easy mather," she answered, sagely. "Has n't Misthress Dyke called to see him sivin times?".

"She 'as, your 'Ighness, she 'as."

"That's once for each day, and siven days makes a week, does n't it?"

"Hi never wuz a good 'and hat arithmetic, but Hi 'as faith in the correctness of your calculation," responded Buster.

"Siven times has she called and so disapinted each time that he has n't returned. Did yez give her his adthress?"

"Hi did not, coz has 'ow Hi expected 'im 'ome hevery day. Hit 'll do 'er good, Mrs. Malone. Disappointments is disciplinationary, hand disciplination his wot womens need. Hit mikes 'em contented like. Oh, Hi tells yer, Mrs. Malone, my wife 'll be han 'appy female. She 'll 'ave a master, she will."

Mrs. Malone gave the boy a vigorous push that sent him staggering, and as Lord Castlereagh neglected to get out of the way, boy and dog suddenly assumed recumbent and by no means graceful attitudes upon the floor.

"Arrah, get out o' thot," she remarked, complacently viewing the disaster she had wrought.

"My heye!" said Buster, in an astonished tone, "wot his this hany 'ow? His hit according to London

prize ring rules, hor just knock down hand drag habout till death do hus part?"

"Give me no more airs, you little puckorn. The size of yez, talking about the holy state of matrimony!" said Mrs. Malone, rebukingly, as Buster climbed up to his feet, slightly jarred by the force with which he had taken his seat. "Did yez tell Mr. Moore that the young lady called?"

"No, Hi did not, Mrs. Malone, you hinquisitive ole party."

"Why not, me bucko?"

"Coz Hi wishes to surprise 'im, that 's w'y," said the boy defiantly. "Hand hif you lays 'and hon me agin, Hi 'll 'ave Lord Castlereagh bite you good hand 'arty where it 'll do you the most good hand be the least missed."

"Niver mind thot."

"Hi won't hif you won't, Hi 'm sure, Mrs. Malone, and as for the young lidy, she has n't been 'ere to-day," said Buster.

"Oh, never fear," returned Mrs. Malone. "She 'll come, and it 's glad I am that he 's back agin."

"W'y? Did you miss 'im?"

"Niver mind. It 's the young leddy I 'm tinking of. Faith, suppose she got discouraged and stopped a-coming?"

"That 'ud show she was n't worth 'aving," replied Buster wisely. "Now see 'ere, Mrs. Malone, w'en she comes Hi wants you to let 'er hup widout hany announcement. Does you 'ear?"

"Oh, I hears, but for phwat should I do that, Mr. Buster?"

"You just leave it to me, your 'Ighness. Hi knows how these haffairs should be conducted."

"Oh, yez do, do yez?" said Mrs. Malone in a derisive tone, as she ambled toward the door. "It 's in an orphan asylum yez ought to be."

"Not hat all," retorted Buster. "Hi 'as no time to waste hon 'aving horphings."

The worthy landlady met Moore in the hall as she quitted his apartments, and overwhelmed him with the heartiness of her welcome, but, mindful of Buster's instructions, said never a word concerning the visits of Mistress Dyke. Moore, having made as speedy an escape as was possible without wounding the old woman's feelings, entered the attic, being received with much doggish delight by Lord Castlereagh, who seemed to ignore the fact that he had ceased to be a puppy several years before.

"Good hevening, Mr. Moore," said Buster politely, about to deliver the post to his master.

"Good evening, *Montgomery*," replied Moore, severely, drawing off his gloves.

"Montgomery?" echoed the boy, thoroughly disgusted. "Ho, don't call me that, sir, please don't."

"Well, that 's your name, is n't it?"

"Ho, Hi knows hit, alas!" said Buster, in an injured tone. "Hi knows hit only too well. W'en Hi wuz too little to defend myself w'en put hupon, my hole woman hup and christens me Montgomery Julien Hethelbert, hand 'itches hit hon to the family nime hof Spinks."

"Montgomery Julien Ethelbert —"

"*Spinks.* Yes sir, that 's hit. Wuz n't that a crime? That 's wot stunted my growth, most likely."

"It seems plausible," observed Moore, in secret vastly amused.

"Yes, hit do," continued the boy, sadly. "Say, sir, won't you allus call me Buster?"

"No, sir," responded Moore, sternly. "You were fighting again this afternoon. As punishment for your pugilistic propensities I refuse to call you Buster again to-day."

"Ho, law!" exclaimed Buster, "but this 'ere punishment is horful. We wuz honly 'aving a gime, sir, just playin' like."

"Indeed? I happened to see you myself this time. I won't have you half killing the neighbors' children that way."

"You saw me? Oh, Hi say, was n't that a helegant gesture w'en I soaked 'im hon the nob? Did n't Hi do 'im hup brown, eh? Hand that jolt hin the breadbasket wid my left fisty. Ho, that cert'nly wuz a pet!"

"Montgomery Julien," began the poet, severely.

The lad wilted.

"Ho, don't, sir, don't. Hit makes me *that* fretful," he said pleadingly. "Hi 'll reform, really Hi will."

"Do so, then," said Moore. "And remember, if I ever hear of your fighting again, I 'll never call you anything but Montgomery."

"Yessir," replied Buster, with a low bow. "Hi 'ears, hand to 'ear his to hobey. Hi retires from the prize ring to-day, hand my champeenship Hi resigns to the red-'eaded butcher boy hacross the w'y. 'Ere 's the post, sir."

Moore took the two letters from the lad and sat down beside the table to examine them.

"From publishers, h'are n't they?" said Buster interestedly.

Moore nodded.

"That they are, lad," he answered, opening the first as he spoke. "Ah, here is an inclosure."

"Hinside?" asked Buster, eagerly.

"Where else?" demanded the poet. "Did you think it would be wrapped around the outside? From the *Gazette*. One pound. Good. A pound is better than ten shillings any day."

"Ha munth hagow hit 'ud 'ave been ten pun," said Buster, shaking his round head.

"But it 's nine well lost," answered Moore, adding to himself, "aye, well lost, since it is for Bessie's sake."

He found a note inside and read it aloud.

"MR. THOMAS MOORE—

"DEAR SIR, — Inclosed find one pound in payment for your poem, 'Inconstancy,' which, owing to your present unpopularity, we feel compelled to print under the name Thomas Little."

"Hi likes their imperence," cried Buster in disgust. "'Little,' indeed!"

"That accounts for the size of the check, no doubt," observed the poet. "Two days ago it was 'Tom Brown;' next week it will be 'Tom Green' or 'Tom Fool.' However, it does n't matter if Tom Moore gets the money."

"Hi 'll let 'em use my nime," suggested the lad in noble self-sacrifice. "My folks his all dead, so the publis'ty won't kill 'em. Montgomery Julien Hethelbert would look grite hin print."

"I quite agree with you," said Moore, laughing. "Ah, Buster, me boy, it 's sweet to be back in the old place. I 'd not give it, bare and ugly as it is, for one of the fine places I 've wined and dined in since leaving it, if Bessie were only here to brighten it for me."

Buster looked around him comprehensively.

"Hit does need cleaning hup a bit," he said apologetically. "Hi 'll see wot Hi can do to-morrer."

"And you say there has been no letter for me from her?" continued Moore.

"Not one letter, sir," replied Buster.

"And you have n't seen her, Buster?"

The boy gave a yell of pain, and slapped his hand to his face, at the same time executing a double shuffle with his feet.

"What ails you, lad?" asked the poet in astonishment.

"My toot' haches me," explained Buster, who had invented this complaint by way of diverting his master's inquiries.

"Fall in love, Buster," advised Moore, "and the pain in your heart will make you forget the pain in your tooth."

"Hit 's better now, sir," announced the boy, jubilant that he had kept his master from all knowledge of Mistress Dyke without real denial of her visits.

"Now for the other letter," said Moore.

This was the bulky package. Buster's suspicions that it inclosed a disappointment proved not unfounded, for there was a manuscript poem folded within.

"Humph," grunted Moore, scornfully. "What bad taste they display.

"'MR. THOMAS MOORE—

"'DEAR SIR,— In view of your present unpopularity—'

Oh, I hate that d—n word, Buster."

"Hit is a bit narsty," assented the boy.

"—we feel obliged to return your poem entitled 'To Bessie."

"Confound them!"

Unfolding the poem, Moore ran his eye over its neatly written lines.

At this moment the door behind him opened softly, and Bessie crept in as quietly as any mouse. Buster saw her, and, leaning over the table, asked his master to read him the rejected verses.

"Certainly, Buster, since you wish it," said Moore, good-naturedly. "It will help on your literary education."

"That hit will, sir," said Buster, stepping where he could motion Bessie to remain silent without being detected by his master.

"'To Bessie,'" announced Moore, beginning to read, little thinking that the girl was so near.

"Tho' brimmed with blessings, pure and rare,
Life's cup before me lay,
Unless thy love were mingled there
I 'd spurn the draught away.

"Without thy smile the monarch's lot
To me were dark and lone,
While, with it, even the humblest cot
Were brighter than his throne.

"Those worlds for which the conqueror sighs
For me would have no charms,
My only world thy gentle eyes,
My throne thy circling arms."

Suddenly a pair of soft round arms were around his neck, and the poem he had just read with such love

and tenderness was plucked from his grasp without warning.

Moore sprang to his feet with a low cry of surprise.

"Bessie," he said, incredulously. "You?"

"Don't you know me?" she asked with a little pout, as Buster, followed by the bulldog, stole discreetly from the room. "Have you forgotten how I look so soon?"

"Forgotten?" he echoed. "Is it likely, Bessie?"

"You seem surprised to see me."

"I can't deny that," he answered in wonder. "Forgive me if I ask to what I am indebted for this visit?"

"Oh," said Bessie, indifferently, "I came to see if you have written any more poems about the Prince. Tom, how could you do it? He was so fond of you."

"That may be," replied Moore, assuming a dignified air, "but I can't let friendship interfere with my politics."

"Then it was your duty, Tom?"

"It was my duty," he answered, gloomily.

"I think you were unpardonable," said the girl.

"I see," replied Moore, "you came to reproach me, Bessie."

"What a deceitful fellow you are," she went on, shaking her pretty head in a sad way.

"I am," admitted the poet. "I am. Go on, Bessie, don't spare me."

She advanced a step or two as he, at a loss to understand why she was thus baiting him, turned bitterly away.

"I can't spare you," she said sternly.

"So it seems," he murmured, not looking at her, lest the sight of her girlish beauty make the pain in his heart too great to be endured.

"I can't spare you," she repeated, "I can't spare you," but this time her tone was one of loving tenderness and he turned to look at her in surprise.

She was standing with outstretched arms, her face eager and adoring, the old light shining soft and clear in her eyes.

"Without you, Tom, there is no happiness for me. Tom dear, Tom darling, can't you see I 've come here because I love you?"

"What?" he exclaimed, and then, mindful of past disappointments, he raised his hand imploringly. "You are sure you are not joking this time?"

"Joking?" she repeated, advancing toward him. "Let this assure you."

As she spoke she kissed him full on the mouth, not once but thrice.

"Now are you convinced I am in earnest?" she asked shyly.

"Partly," he replied, still unable to fully realize that she had surrendered at last. "Convince me some more, Bessie."

Then as she kissed him again, he folded her in his arms and held her to his heart so tightly that she released herself with a little gasp.

"Please remember, sir, that I have to breathe," she remonstrated.

"I forgot everything, except that I had you in my arms," he answered. "Ah, Bessie darlin', my heart was breaking for you. I love you so much, dearest."

He embraced her again, and pressed her soft cool

cheek to his, and it must be admitted she appeared to enjoy this proceeding as much as he did.

"Sure," he whispered, "if heaven is half as sweet as this let me die to-morrow."

"You took the blame to save my father. Oh, Tom, I 'll never forgive you."

"Keep on not forgiving me," he suggested, for she had given him another kiss.

"I made him tell me," said she, complying with his request before sitting down by the table, "but the next day you had gone."

"I know," said Moore, "I went out into the country. It helped me, as it always does. It comforted me, but not as you have done."

"And while you were gone I came here every day to see if you had returned."

"What is that?" he demanded. "You came here, dearest?"

Bessie nodded gleefully.

"I did not miss a day, not even Sunday," she said.

"That little devil of a Buster!" cried Moore, glaring around the attic in quest of him. "The imp! Wait till I lay my hands upon him!"

"He did n't tell you, Tom?"

"Not a word. If I had known, it is no sight of me the trees and the fields would have had."

Bessie rose from her chair, and stepping back a little distance, looked archly at her lover.

"Have you forgotten what you said?" she asked.

"Since I don't remember, I think I must have," said Moore puzzled.

"Then I 'll tell you, sir."

"That 's good of you, Bessie," said he.

"You told me I would have to ask you to marry me," she answered, a little timidly. "Tom dear, I love you; will you be my husband?"

"This is so sudden," said Moore, and he sat down in the chair she had vacated.

"What is your answer, Tom?" she asked, almost anxiously.

"I 'll have to be wooed further before I give it," he declared, keenly relishing the situation.

"I 'll do it," she murmured. "I 'll do it. Tom, I love you better than all the world. With all my heart and soul I love you."

She knelt beside him and drew his head down on her shoulder.

"I love you," she whispered again, and held him close.

"But," he sighed in happy endurance of the unwonted attentions he was receiving, "Why do you love me so desperately? Is it because of my beauty or my goodness?"

"It 's both, Tom."

"Oh, I have it," he exclaimed, "it 's my wealth."

"Tom," she said reproachfully and rose to her feet, but before she could reprimand him for his last assertion his arm was around her waist.

"Bessie dear," he said solemnly, "do you know, for a moment in the joy of your coming I forgot my poverty."

"I did not, Tom," she answered.

"You are an angel of love and beauty, dear girl; you have taken a load from my heart and brightened my life this day. I can't tell you how I adore you, how

grateful I am for what you have said to me, but I cannot marry you."

"Tom," she cried reproachfully. "Do you think I do not know of that wretched bargain to which you were driven by that terrible publisher?"

"Who told you?"

"Mr. Sheridan."

"Will that old Irishman never learn to keep his mouth shut?"

"Never, while he can do good to a friend by opening it, Tom."

"I 'll sue him if he keeps on."

"That does n't seem to do much good, dear lad; I 've been suing ever since I came here this afternoon, and I do not seem to have accomplished anything. Tom, say we shall be married soon, there 's a dear."

"Bessie," he said slowly, holding her at arm's length, so that he could look deep into her eyes, "I 'll have to get a clerkship somewhere before that can be. My whole literary work is mortgaged for the future."

"You shall not keep that wicked agreement, Tom."

"Oh, Bessie, a promise is a promise," said Moore. "When I have found a position I 'll consider your proposal of marriage. Can't you see, dear, what poor proof of my love for you it would be to allow you to share my present lot? Think how we should struggle, perhaps almost starve."

"I should not care if I were with you," she said.

"But I, Bessie? It would break my heart to know you were bearing such desolation for love of me."

"Where there is love there can be no desolation."

Moore's voice shook as he answered her, but he remained firm in his determination.

"You are the bravest girl in all the world, Bessie, but even your sweet words shan't make me close my eyes to the truth. We will go on as we are now. I 'll fight it out, and when I am satisfied that I can offer you one tithe of what you deserve, if God wills that I succeed, I 'll come to you with open arms. I 've no head for business. It 's a new world I 'll have to conquer, dear. We must wait and I 'll not let you bind yourself to me. Perhaps there will be some one else some day — "

She stopped his mouth with a kiss.

"How can you be so cruel?" she half sobbed. "There can never be any one but you."

"But," he said mischievously, "you took so long to make up your mind, I thought — "

"Tom, you don't love me or you would not tease me so."

"Oh, if you are to be believed, teasing is no sign of indifference," said Moore. "It 's a leaf from the book you wrote me this last year that you are reading now, Bessie!"

"You are so obstinate," she sighed. "Ah, Tom, you will succeed in spite of all. I know you will."

"Then, dearest, let us wait. Think, how can I expect you to obey me as my wife if you disobey me as a sweetheart?"

"But," said the girl, pouting, "I am not used to being rejected."

"*I am,*" said he. "It is good experience."

"I suppose I 'll have to let you have your way."

"I suppose you will, Bessie."

"Father is coming after me in half an hour," she continued, taking off her hat as she spoke.

"So soon?" responded Moore, regretfully.

There was a knock on the door.

"Come in," said Bessie, quite at home as lady of the house.

"What is that?" said Moore, looking at her.

"Come in," she repeated, blushing as she realized her presumption.

"So you have established yourself already?" said the poet, his eyes twinkling, as he opened the door.

It was Mrs. Malone, resplendent in the best her wardrobe could afford.

Chapter Twenty-Three

THE POET HAS CALLERS AND GIVES A DINNER-PARTY

"GOOD avening, Misther Moore. Oh, it's yourself, Mistress Dyke? The top of the afternoon, darling. I just dropped in for a moment to tell yez the news."

"Ah," said Moore, hopefully, "the rent has been lowered, I suppose?"

"You will have your joke, Misther Moore," chuckled the landlady, sitting down in the chair Moore placed for her.

"And you'll have your rent, eh, Mrs. Malone?"

"Tom," said Bessie, "do be still. What is the news, Mrs. Malone?"

"You are a couple of gossips," declared Moore, sitting on the table between Bessie and the old woman. "Oh, well, scandal is the spice of life they say."

"Well," began Mrs. Malone, in a tone appropriate to the importance of her story, "it seems that Sweeny, who kapes the grocery next door but two, has been having throuble with his darter."

"My, oh, my!" exclaimed Moore, properly horrified at the unfilial behavior of the young person mentioned.

"Hush, Tom."

"Why don't he spank the girl?" demanded the poet. "If my daughter —"

"Tom!" said Bessie, giving him a reproving pinch.

"Well, I mean *if* ever I have a daughter."

"When you have will be time enough to tell about her, won't it, Mrs. Malone."

"Faith," said that hopeful old female, "I luvs to hear young couples planning for the future."

"Go on out of that," said Moore, shaking with laughter, while Bessie was visibly discomposed. "You make me blush, Mrs. Malone."

"I niver t'ought I 'd do thot," observed the landlady. "I t'inks that must be one of your kump'ny manners. Howiver, to continyer."

"I would if I were you, Mrs. Malone."

"Well how can I, if yez kape on bletherin'?"

"I 'm silent as the grave, Mrs. Malone."

"Jane Sweeny is the purtiest gal in the neighborhood —"

"Bar one, Mrs. Malone, bar one," interrupted Moore.

"Prisent company is always accepted," said the landlady, politely wagging her frilled cap till it creaked in its starchy immaculateness.

"If you had been here a few moments ago, you would have heard it refused," said Bessie, ruefully.

"Who is interrupting now?" demanded Moore in wrathful tones.

"Well, the lassie has took up kapin kump'ny on the sly wid some strange laddybuck, whom nobody knows a t'ing about, and will hardly look at the dairyman's son Ike, wid whom she has been thrainin' these t'ree years."

"The faithless hussy!" ejaculated the poet, in scathing condemnation.

"Hush!" said Bessie, now scenting a love story, and correspondingly interested.

"So Isaac — that 's the son of the dairyman, you know — "

"I 'm satisfied on that point, if the dairyman is," observed Moore, wickedly.

Bessie took a pin from her dress.

"I 'll punch you with this if you don't behave, Tom Moore."

"Is that a joke, Bessie?"

"Yes, you 'll think so."

"Well, I won't be able to see the point of it if you perforate me. Go on, Mrs. Malone."

"So he swore he 'd get even — "

"The dairyman? Oh, then he *did* have his doubts after all? Whom did he suspect, Mrs. Malone?"

Moore leaped off the table just in time to escape a vicious thrust from the pin, as Mrs. Malone, good-naturedly indifferent to his interruption, continued her recital.

"Ike thracked the fine fellow home, or at least as far as he could, and though he lost sight of him without locatin' his house, he learned beyond all doubtin' that he is a great gentleman of wealth and fashion."

"Ike is? I 'll have to look him up if that is so," said Moore, pleasantly. "Evidently the dairyman was right to be suspicious, and what does Mrs. Dairyman say now?"

"I 'm not talkin' about Ike," replied Mrs. Malone, scornfully. "It 's the strange lad who is the rich man."

"Oh, I see, Mrs. Malone. I thought you had discovered the reason for the dairyman's suspicions. Now I think he was quite unreasonable to have his doubts."

"Go on, Mrs. Malone. I think it is delightfully romantic," said Bessie, paying no attention to the remarks of her lover.

"Romantic!" repeated Moore, in a disgusted tone. "Sure, put a bit of a scoundrel after a lass of lower station and instead of shouting for the watch she always says 'How romantic!'"

"You will have to leave the room, if you speak again before Mrs. Malone has finished her story," said Bessie, severely.

"So, by hook or by crook, who should get wind of Misther Gay Spark, but Sweeny himself."

Mrs. Malone paused dramatically, that the awful news of the situation should have time to take effect.

"Oh, dear!" said Bessie, "how terrible for poor Jane. Do tell me the rest without delay. I 'm getting so excited."

"I 'll not sleep to-night, thinking of it," declared Moore. "Really, Mrs. Malone, you do wrong to harrow up our feelings in this thrilling manner. Well, Jennie is discovered, and then —?"

"Then Sweeny learned that the unknown gintilman was to meet her to-night."

"How did he learn that?" asked Moore, greatly interested.

"From Jane."

"That girl talks too much. She does n't deserve to be the flame of such a spark," said the poet, utterly disgusted with the heroine of the tale.

"Niver mind thot. So Sweeny has locked up the gal in her room —"

"Alone?"

"Faith, who would be likely to be with her, sorr?"

"Well, you said something about a gay incognito, did n't you?" suggested Moore.

"I niver did in me loife. I 'll have yez to understand, Misther Moore, I 'd scorn to use such profane langwidge. I 'm a dacent Catholic, as Father O'Houlihan will tell yez, if yez ask him."

"I 'll ask him the next time I see him," said Moore. "It is always best to be sure about these things. But go on, Mrs. Malone."

"Where was I?"

"You were locked up in the room with Jane Sweeny."

"I wuz not, sorr."

"I 'm sure it could n't have been with Sir Incognito," said Moore, shocked.

"If I wuz locked up wid Jane Sweeny how could I be here now?" demanded the landlady.

"Perhaps you made a ladder of the bedclothes, and let yourself down from the window," suggested the poet.

"I did not, sorr," replied Mrs. Malone, quite puzzled by the web in which her lodger had entangled her.

"Then I 'll give it up, as I never was a good hand at conundrums," said Moore, bubbling over with merriment. "Go on with your story about Father O'Houlihan's gay friend."

"Well anniehow, Isaac and Sweeny and some other of the byes is laying for Masther Gay Spark."

"For what purpose, Mrs. Malone?"

"For what do yez t'ink?"

"Perhaps they wish to present him with the freedom of the city and a service of silver plate."

"Not much," said Mrs. Malone. "They are going to bate his head off for him, thot 's what they are going to do."

"Are n't they good-natured, Bessie?" said Moore. "I hope he will see the humorous side of the affair and treat it all as a joke."

"Well, it will be no laughing matter," said Mrs. Malone, stoutly. "As I said before, they 'll make jelly of Masther Gay Spark."

"How terrible!" said Bessie, half frightened.

"Quite," said Moore. "He 'll have a sugary time I'm thinking, for if heaven don't preserve him, Sweeny will turn him into jelly. I 'm afraid he will be badly jammed one way or another."

"Who can this strange gallant be?" asked Bessie.

"By Gad, what if he were Sir Percival?" exclaimed the poet, struck suddenly by the thought.

"You don't think so, Tom?"

"No, dear," said Moore, soothingly, "no such good luck I 'm afraid."

"Well, I t'ink I must be goin'," observed Mrs. Malone, rising from her chair reluctantly. "Good avenin' to yez both, darlin's. Oh, there will be doin's to-night, there will be doin's."

"Tell the dairyman I sympathize with him in his domestic disappointments," said Moore, "and give my regards to your friend Master Incognito, though he is a naughty boy. And a word to you, Mrs. Malone. Don't trust him too far yourself. I 'd never be alone

with him, if I were you, for it is best to be on the safe side always."

"Stop your tazing me, Tom Moore, or I 'll take you across me knee and give you what you deserve," retorted the landlady, with a broad grimace which was quite in keeping with her portly person.

Moore opened the door with a bow in his most drawing-room manner, and having bestowed upon Bessie a ponderous courtesy, the old woman waddled out, running into Mr. Sheridan, who, being about to enter, was thus rudely thrust back against Mr. Brummell, who, elegantly attired as usual, was directly behind him.

"Zooks!" exclaimed the Beau plaintively. "Sherry, I told you that you should not drink that last glass. You have ruffled my cravat in a most shameful manner."

"I beg your parding, gintlemen," said Mrs. Malone, remorsefully, "but divil a bit did I see yez."

"Mistress Bridget, no apologies are necessary," said Mr. Sheridan, graciously. "How well you are looking to-day."

"D' ye t'ink so?" giggled the ancient dame, more than tickled by her great countryman's condescension.

"On me honor," replied Mr. Sheridan. "You agree with me, don't you, George?"

"Entirely," drawled Brummell, "entirely, 'pon my soul. How d' ye do, Tom?"

Moore's face beamed with delight as he saw who his visitors were.

"I 'm fine," he said. "Come in, friends, and make yourself easy."

"Mistress Dyke," murmured Brummell, with a courtly bow.

"Mistress Moore that is to be," corrected Moore, proudly, "whenever I can afford such a luxury."

"What did I tell you, George?" said Sheridan, delightedly, nudging the Beau with his elbow.

"Do be careful, Sherry," replied Brummell, warningly. "Tom, I congratulate you."

"So do I," said Sheridan. "You have a cheerful den, Tommy. Here is a home for you, Brummell."

"Does Mr. Brummell need a home?" asked Moore, waving his guests to the most comfortable of the chairs.

"Faith, the Beau is better at breaking them than making them," remarked the elder man, with a chuckle.

"Zooks!" drawled Brummell, "that reminds me of an execrable jest of which the Regent was guilty a fortnight ago. 'Why am I like a farmer?' he inquired of Percy Lovelace, who politely confessed that he could detect no resemblance. 'Because,' said his Highness, 'I keep a rake within reach,' and pointed with his monocle at Richard Brinsley."

"That is a mighty bad pun, I 'm thinking," said Moore to Bessie.

"Tom," she said warningly, "are you not already sufficiently out of favor?"

"Pooh, Bessie, these lads are my friends. Tell me the news, you old gossip. Am I still in disgrace?"

Sheridan shook his gray wig dolefully.

"You are, Tommy, I regret to say," he answered. "The Regent honors you with his personal profanity almost daily."

Brummell took a dainty pinch of snuff and proceeded to change the subject.

"Have you heard of the Prince's quarrel with Mrs. FitzHerbert?" he asked.

"No," said Moore, "have those turtle-doves had a falling out?"

"Oh, it won't last long," said Sheridan, "but while it does endure it is a mighty warm little spat."

"What caused the trouble if I may ask, Sherry?"

"The drollest reason," said the Beau with a dignified smile. "You 'll never guess it, Tommy."

"Then I 'll not try."

"Tell him, Sherry," said the Beau, adjusting his ruffles.

"She became angry because the Regent visited his wife late in the evening without a chaperon," laughed the old Irishman.

"My, oh, my!" exclaimed Moore, horrified. "Has the Prince no sense of decorum?"

"How goes the world with you, children?" demanded Sheridan, kindly. "Do you manage to exist without the approval of royalty?"

"We are getting on somehow. I have enough to eat, almost enough to drink —"

"You are indeed fortunate," interjected Sheridan. "I cannot recall any period in my career when I had anywhere near enough to drink."

"You must remember, Sherry," said the Beau, languidly, "every Irishman does not have a bottomless pit where nature usually places a stomach. Your pardon, Mistress Dyke, for using so corporeal a term."

"Well, to continue," said Moore, "besides the possessions already enumerated I have a roof over my head, and these same luxuries I can offer to my wife when I get her."

Bessie looked up at him lovingly as he sat down on the arm of the chair she occupied.

"We will be so happy," she said shyly to Mr. Sheridan.

"And we will need no chaperon, I 'm thinking," said Moore.

"I 'll wager you won't," said Sheridan, wisely. "Well, George, let 's get on our way."

"What 's that?" said Moore, quickly. "Get on your way? Not much. You are going to stay to supper with us."

"Well," said Sheridan, who had risen in a hesitating way, "I —"

"Oh," said Moore, divining the cause of his countryman's embarrassment, "it is true that you won't get much to eat, but you are more than welcome to whatever there is; and besides, think of the company you will be in."

"That last decides me, if Mistress Dyke extends the invitation," said Sheridan, yielding in response to a nod from the Beau, who had decided to remain.

"Tom speaks for both of us," said Bessie. "Don't you, Tom?"

"Yes, and some day I 'll listen for both of us, no doubt. That will be when she points out my faults, lads. You must stay. Bessie will make the tea — that is, if there is any tea. If there is n't any, she 'll mix the whisky."

"Good," said Sheridan, smacking his lips.

"But there is tea," said the girl, opening the caddy which she found in the cupboard.

"Just our luck, eh, Sherry?" said the poet, disconsolately.

Buster entered at this opportune moment and busied himself, with the assistance of Bessie, in preparing the simple meal.

Moore drew the chairs into position by the table as Bessie laid the plates.

"You are to sit there, you disreputable old Hibernian," said he, assisting Sheridan to a seat on the right.

"Your place is there at the end, Fashion Plate. I 'll preside just opposite you across the festive board, and Bessie shall sit on your left hand."

"Is she heavy?" inquired Sheridan, interestedly, as he sat down.

"I 'm speaking metaphorically," the poet rattled on. "How goes the play, Sherry?"

"'Pizarro' is certainly doing a fine business," replied the aged dramatist. "The public likes blood and thunder."

"I suppose you sent a box to the Dutchman that wrote it?" said Moore.

"On the contrary, Tommy, I think he should buy one to see how his play should have been written in the first place," replied Sheridan, not at all disconcerted, for he made no bones about admitting his indebtedness to Kotzebue for his last great success. "For my part, I 'm afraid Anacreon might not appreciate some of the Odes as now rendered according to the gospel of Thomas."

"Well, he was dead when I tackled him," retorted Moore.

"Which no doubt saved you from answering at the bar to the charge of manslaughter, for I 'm sure he 'd never have survived the heroic treatment you gave him."

"Tea is ready," announced Bessie, opportunely.

"Good," said Moore. "Buster, bring the wine."

"But there hain't none," responded the lad.

"Bring it, anyway. Any one can bring wine when there is wine, but it takes a smart boy to fetch it when there is n't any."

"Hi hain't smart henuff," said Buster.

"It is of no importance, Tom," said Brummell, graciously.

"Since when?" demanded Moore in surprise. "How is that, Sherry?"

"I never drink," said the elder man, waving aside the idea of alcoholic indulgence with a gesture of fine contempt.

"No?" asked the poet, wonderingly. "Oh, I suppose you have it rubbed into your skin by your valet."

At this moment Bessie, having finished setting the table, sat down in the chair pulled out for her by Sheridan and the Beau in gallant competition, and the supper began.

"Will you say grace, Brummell?" asked Moore.

"Say it yourself," drawled the Arbiter of Fashion, smiling lazily at his hostess.

"But, his Highness thinks me a graceless rogue," objected the poet, "so it would be an act of treason for me to prove him a liar."

"Well, then, I 'll say it meself," volunteered Sheridan, with a wink at Moore.

"Good man. Hush, now, every one."

Sheridan rose from his chair and leaning over took possession of the bread plate.

"Ah," said Moore, knowingly, "then it is to be 'Give us this day our daily bread,' eh, Sherry?"

"You are away off the scent, Tommy," responded the dramatist in a superior tone. "Nothing so conventional would be appropriate for this festive occasion."

"Do go on, Sherry," advised Brummell, "I am growing disgracefully hungry."

"Anything to oblige, Beau. See, friends,

> 'There 's bread here for four of us:
> Thank God, there 's no more of us!'"

Sheridan sat down amidst the laughing approval of the others.

"That," observed Moore, "is what I call a curst fine bit of prayer-making. Sherry and I like our prayers like our liquor — concentrated."

"Your remark is a trifle paradoxical," commented Brummell. "Yes, Mistress Bessie, sugar and milk both."

"Brummell has a sweet tooth," said Sheridan, taking the cup Bessie passed him.

"And Bessie has a sweet mouth," said Moore, buttering his bread generously.

"I suppose you know all about that, Tom?"

"Trust me for that, Sherry."

"That sort of credit is easy for an Irishman to obtain," said the old gentleman.

"With Bessie?" inquired Moore. "That shows you have never tried, Sherry."

"He does n't know whether I have or not, does he, Mistress Bessie?"

"Of course he does n't," chimed in the girl, coquettishly. "We don't have to tell him all our little frolics, do we?"

"I 'd hate to if I hoped to retain his friendship," chuckled the wit. "It is like confident youth to imagine itself ever the only favored."

"Look here," said Moore, aggressively, "there will be enough of this supper, such as it is, to go around handsomely without trying to spoil my appetite with your base innuendoes, you old scandal-school maker."

"He is jealous," observed Sheridan. "Just have the kindness to remember my age, Thomas."

"How can I when you yourself do not?" asked the poet, slyly. "Brummell, pass the butter. If it 's stronger than you are, shout for help."

"You wrong the article," said the Beau, handing over the desired plate. "It 's quiescence is most amiable."

"That reminds me," Moore remarked thoughtfully, "of a scheme I have for increasing the volume of the milk given by the cow."

"Volume?" repeated Sheridan. "D' ye mean the way the tale is presented to the public?"

"Well, if you let the bovine offspring remain too adjacent it 's bound in calf the lacteal fluid would be," replied Moore.

"Faith, the animal should be brought to book for that," returned Sheridan.

"She 'd probably turn pale at the thought and kick over the cream," retorted Moore.

"Dear me!" cried Bessie, "what brilliant gentlemen, are they not, Mr. Brummell?"

"Yes, Mistress Dyke," answered the Beau, "*they are not.*"

Bessie laughed at the unexpected termination of the Beau's remark.

"A couple of silly punsters, 'pon my honor," sighed the exquisite, nibbling his bread daintily.

"I think, Sherry," said Moore, "after that rebuke we had better be less witty. I 'll tell my story later on. The bill of fare includes chicken, gentlemen."

"Oh, Tom," said Bessie, shocked, "how can you fib so?"

"In the shell, Bessie, in the shell," explained the host, holding up an egg. "Cold and hard, but so young it would melt in your mouth. Then comes bread-and-butter and tea."

"My favorite dish, believe me," declared Brummell.

"Then comes tea and bread-and-butter. Next, some cups and saucers and knives and forks."

"D'ye think we are ostriches?" demanded Sheridan.

"Then comes the best of all, gentlemen, the dessert."

"And what may that be, Tommy?"

"Well, it *may* be custard pudding —"

"Ah!" said Brummell in an approving tone.

"But it *is n't*," continued Moore. "It is something even sweeter and softer."

"Don't arouse my curiosity further," pleaded Sheridan.

"Well, then, we are to have kisses for dessert."

Sheridan and the Beau applauded noisily while Bessie blushed in a most becoming manner.

"How is the dessert to be served, Tommy?"

"I kiss Bessie," said Moore, exultantly. "Then comes your turn, Sherry."

"Ah!" said that gentleman, smacking his lips in anticipation.

"Then comes your turn, Sherry. You kiss Brummell."

The wit gave an exclamation of disappointment, while the rest of the party laughed heartily.

"Really, Tom," said the Beau, "this egg is delicious."

"Sure it is," replied his host. "We raised that one on the bottle, did n't we, Bessie?"

Meanwhile he had helped himself to another, and cracking the shell, turned away with an exclamation of disgust.

"Oh, Lord!" he exclaimed, holding his nose. "Bessie, I knew I ought to have hurried home with that egg if I wanted to eat it. Faith, it is too much a chicken to be an egg, and too much egg to be a chicken. Buster, accept this with my compliments."

Buster obediently carried away the cause of the trouble and stowed it outside on a corner of the window-sill, reserving it for use as ammunition at some future time.

"I never drank such tea, Mistress Bessie," said Sheridan, passing his cup to be refilled. "Really you are an enchantress."

"She enchanted me years ago," said Moore.

"I suited him to a tee the first time I saw him," said Bessie, laughing.

"A pun is the lowest form of humor," said Moore, severely.

"And therefore at the bottom of all true wit," said Sheridan, coming to his hostess's defence like the gallant old Irishman he was.

"It seems to me you two are very thick," said Moore, critically. "I 'll have you to understand, Richard Brinsley, that I am not to be treated with contempt."

"I think Irish whisky would be what I should treat you with, Tommy."

"A happy thought," cried the poet. "Buster, the Dew of Heaven."

"Some 'un just knocked, Mr. Moore," said the boy.

"Then open the door, you gossoon."

Buster did so, and Lord Brooking stepped quickly into the room.

Chapter Twenty-Four

TOM MOORE HEARS OF A POLITICAL APPOINTMENT

"LORD BROOKING," cried Bessie in surprise, rising from the table. "I thought you were still on the Continent."

"Not I, Mistress Dyke. I returned yesterday. So, Mr. Moore, you have been getting into trouble, have you?"

"Did you ever hear of an Irishman who was able to keep out of it long?" asked Sheridan, waving his hand in greeting to the young nobleman.

"Your lordship has come just in time. Buster, call that bulldog away before Lord Brooking bites him. Get another plate, lad. Sherry, move up and make room for his lordship."

"There hain't any more plites," said Buster in a hoarse whisper.

"Then get a saucer," commanded Moore, gaily.

"No, no, Tom," said his lordship. "I've just dined."

"Oh, you know you are welcome," said Moore. "Don't be too polite if you are hungry."

"I could n't eat a mouthful," said Lord Brooking.

"That's d—n lucky!" whispered Moore to Sheridan.

"Tut, tut, Tom," quoth that staid old party. "Profanity is a luxury and should be used not abused."

"That's like an obedient wife," said Moore. "Your lordship, this is an impromptu banquet to celebrate my engagement to Mistress Dyke."

"Is the engagement an impromptu?" asked Sheridan.

"No, we got it by heart," said Moore.

Brummell clapped his pretty hands in delight.

"Egad," said he, "I 've not heard such verbal fireworks this six months."

"So you are betrothed, Tom?" said Lord Brooking.

"The darlin' has made me say 'Yes' at last," said Moore in an apparently bashful tone.

"Mistress Dyke," said his lordship, taking her hand and kissing it, "Tom is indeed a lucky man. I wish you both all the happiness you deserve. Hang me, if I 'm not envious, Tom. I 've half a mind to marry myself."

"It takes a smart man to marry himself," commented Moore, "but it is economical."

Brooking sat down and crossed his legs in an easy attitude.

"I have news for you, Tom," said he. "News that I fancy will please you."

"Have you found me a long-lost uncle, childless, wifeless, and worth a million?"

"Not exactly."

"What, then, your lordship? Surely not a long-lost son?"

"I have endeavored to secure you the appointment of Registrar of the Admiralty Court at Bermuda. The salary of the office is five hundred pounds yearly."

"Bermuda?" echoed the poet, hardly able to believe his ears.

"Where the devil is Bermuda?" asked Sheridan, taking snuff.

"That is where the onions come from, you ancient ignoramus, but its geographical location does not matter tuppence," said Moore. "If you get the place for me, sir, I will accept it gladly, and I thank you more than I can tell for the attempt, whether you succeed or not."

"Pshaw," said Lord Brooking, "wait until I put the appointment in your hands, Tom."

"Ah," said Bessie, softly, "your lordship knows how grateful we both are for your many kindnesses."

"Say no more about it," replied the young nobleman, blushing like a girl. "If I may truthfully congratulate myself on having made the world brighter and life's path easier for two such deserving friends, I have gained a satisfaction no money could ever purchase."

Moore shook his patron's hand with a grip that conveyed more than any words of thanks could have done.

"Tommy, my boy, don't you need a private secretary?" inquired Sheridan.

"Thank you, I 'll have no such lady-killer in my official family," replied Moore.

"I congratulate you both," said Brummell, "but we will miss you when Bermuda claims your society."

"You shall still be in touch with the world," said Sheridan. "I 'll write you all the scandal once a week."

"It will take a pound for postage if you write it all, Sherry," said Moore, dubiously.

"And I," said Brummell, rising, pompously, "will keep you informed of the changes I deem advisable to make in the fashions."

"That 's mighty good of you, Beau."

"Oh, that will be splendid," said Bessie. "I will set all the styles on the island."

"Not much," said Moore, horrified. "To do that, Bessie, you would have to wear fig-leaves."

"Promise me, Tom, that you will let me know if the black ladies are as pretty as they say?" said Sheridan.

"I will investigate that matter myself," responded the poet, winking slyly at the dramatist.

"Indeed you will do nothing of the kind, Tom Moore," said Bessie in an indignant tone.

"Certainly not," said he. "Sherry, you are a wicked old man to even suggest such a thing."

"I was always fond of brunettes," said Sheridan, calmly, "like you, Tom."

"What horrid things men are!"

"Old men are," assented Moore. "Sherry, you are a shocking old rascal."

"He is no worse than you, Tom," said the girl.

"Not half so bad, on my honor," observed the elder gentleman.

"You are so, Mr. Sheridan," said the girl, changing front immediately.

"See, Sherry, you can't abuse me with impunity," declared Moore with a chuckle.

"I 'll abuse you with profanity if you do not stop flaunting your amatory success in my venerable countenance," tartly retorted the gay old Irishman.

Lord Brooking looked at his watch.

"Jove!" he exclaimed, "I had no idea it was so late. I must be off."

"So soon?" asked Moore, regretfully, as his lordship rose to his feet.

"I 'm due at Lady Fancourt's amateur theatricals in ten minutes."

"So am I," said Brummell, smoothing his ruffles.

"And I also," said Sheridan. "Is your cab waiting, Brookie, me boy?"

"I think so," responded his lordship. "I 'll be glad of your company. Will you risk close quarters with us, Brummell?"

"Not I, Brooking," said the Beau. "I prefer not to disarrange my costume by crowding Sheridan."

"Aye," said Moore. "An Irishman 's a bad thing for an Englishman to crowd too far. Since you are going to walk, George, I 'll honor myself by seeing you out of the neighborhood. Such swells as you are tempting game, and there is many a dark alley only too handy."

"Good night, Mistress Dyke," said Lord Brooking, bowing low over her hand.

"Good night," she said sweetly, "and thank you again."

"Promise that once in a while you will write me how fortune treats you if you go to Bermuda."

"Every month," answered the girl, her eyes bright with the gratitude which filled her heart. "God bless you, sir."

"Good night," said his lordship again, and stepped out in the hall.

Sheridan kissed Bessie's hand, and purposely lin-

gered over it so long that Moore shook his fist at him.

"Easy there, Sherry, easy there."

"Selfish man!" murmured Sheridan, as he followed Brooking. "Good night, Mistress Dyke."

Brummell bade good night to his hostess and joined the others in their descent as Moore, after making a feint of putting a kiss upon Bessie's hand, at the last moment transferred it to her smiling lips.

"You won't be longer than is necessary, will you, Tom?"

"I 'll not be half that long," said he, running after his guests, who were now well on their way down the first flight of stairs.

Bessie turned from the door with a rapturous sigh, only to receive a reproachful glance from Buster, who was sternly regarding her.

"Wot 'll become hof my morals hif these hindearments continyers?" thought the lad, vaguely jealous. "Hit 's henuff to turn one hagin mater-ri-mony, that 's wot hit his. Hi thinks Hi 'll jine a monkery."

"To Bessie," murmured the girl, kissing the poem as she drew it from her breast, little suspecting Buster's doubtful frame of mind. "Buster, you may clear away the tea-things after you have had your supper. I must go down and tell Mrs. Malone the good news."

"Well, hif she harsks arfter me, say Montgomery Julien Hethelbert sends 'is luv," said the boy, more cheerfully.

"Montgomery Julien Ethelbert," said the girl, opening the door.

When she had closed it behind her, Buster addressed himself disgustedly to his pal, Lord Castlereagh.

"*Montgomery Julien Hethelbert,*" he repeated in high disdain. "Hain't that an 'ell of a nime for a sporting cove like me?"

"Wuff!" barked the dog, in sympathy.

Chapter Twenty-Five

SIR INCOGNITO RECEIVES A WARM WELCOME

THE gentleman whose attentions to Jane Sweeny were causing so much excitement in the neighborhood favored by her residence, little suspecting that a warm welcome was there in preparation for him, let himself quietly out of a little private door in the rear of his great mansion and turned his steps cheerfully towards their rendezvous.

He seemed to be in fine spirits, for once or twice he checked a whistle as it was about to escape from the lips he had unconsciously pursed as he strode quickly along.

It seemed to be his wish to avoid recognition, for he kept his face hidden as much as was rendered possible by his up-turned cloak collar and wide, drawn-down hat brim, though this desire upon his part seemed to grow less imperative as he left the fashionable locality in which he lived, and turning down a side street, followed a course that twisted and turned from poor neighborhood to even poorer, then on till the respectability of the locality was once more on the increase until he found himself on a shabby street not far from the one on which the establishment of Mrs. Malone was situated. The spot at which he had

arranged to meet Sweeny's daughter was now near at hand. The gentleman, who was tall and well shaped, though slightly inclined to corpulence, strolled leisurely along the street, evidently confident that his charmer would not fail to be on hand promptly at their trysting place, but much to his surprise, when he arrived there was no one waiting for him. He paused, gave an exclamation of disappointment, and, drawing out his watch, stepped nearer the street lamp that he might see if he had anticipated the time appointed for his arrival. The timepiece assured him that he was several minutes behind the chosen hour, and after swearing softly to himself, he pocketed it and turned, intending to stroll leisurely up and down the street until the tardy damsel should put in an appearance.

At this moment a stalwart youth, with eyes set widely apart and the jaw of a pugilist, walked softly across from the opposite side. So noiseless was his tread that the first comer did not discover his proximity until he had approached within a yard or two.

"H'are yer witing for some 'un?" demanded the unprepossessing youth, whose name it is almost a needless formality to announce was Isaac.

"What is that to you, sir?" replied the gentleman, haughtily, contemptuously regarding his questioner.

"W'y, sir, Jine harsked me—"

"Oh, Jane sent you then?"

"Ha!" cried the younger man, triumphantly. "Hi wuz sure yer wuz the cove. There hain't no doubt habout it now."

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to inform me as to the reason for this sudden ebullition of delight?" said the gentleman, puzzled by the youth's behavior,

and, if not alarmed, not exactly at ease as to the probable developments of the immediate future.

If his eyes had been a trifle more used to the semi-darkness of the street, particularly at the places midway between the flickering lanterns, on whose incompetent illumination depended the lighting of the great city after nightfall, the elegant stranger would have perceived that his interrogator was not alone. Several little groups had emerged from convenient doorways and cellars, and, clustered in the denser shadows for temporary concealment, awaited a prearranged signal to advance. These sinister-looking individuals were armed with weapons still more sinister, — knotty cudgels, heavy canes, in one instance an axe handle and in another a spade, new and unsullied as yet by labor.

"Ho, Hi 'll be kind henuff, don't 'ee fear," sneered Isaac, and with a quick movement he snatched his felt hat from his bullet head and slapped it viciously across the face of his companion.

Immediately he received a blow on the chin straight from the shoulder of the insulted gallant, which dropped him, an inert bundle of clothing, in the filth of the gutter.

"Down with the swell!" yelled an enthusiastic lad, armed with an empty quart bottle, as the crowd surged forward from both sides, scattering across the street to cut off all chance of their game's escape.

The object of their hostile intentions threw a hurried glance around him and, realizing the futility of attempting to break through the ranks of his enemies, gave an exclamation of despair. Escape seemed impossible, yet surrender was not to be thought of, for

the fate in store for him at their hands was only too plainly evidenced by their demeanor. Turning, he ran up the steps of the house immediately behind him and tried the door. It was locked and made of material far too tough and seasoned to yield to the impact of his weight, as he found when he had hurled himself with crushing force against it.

Meanwhile the mob had almost reached the steps which at their highest point attained an altitude of about eight feet. If he ran down to the street it would be only to rush into their clutches; unarmed as he was he could not long successfully defend the stairs; then what could he do?

"Watch!" he yelled at the top of his lungs. "Watch! Watch to the rescue! Murder! Watch! Help!"

The united force of his pursuers halted in front of the house where he had vainly endeavored to secure an entrance. The game was trapped and their plan had met with success quite unqualified, unless the insensibility resulting from the tremendous punch which Isaac's jaw had received from the gentleman now at bay at the top of the steps could be regarded in the light of a serious reverse. The disposition of the still unconscious youth's companions seemed to be to regard his misfortune in the light of a joke, though their obvious intention was to add this example of the strange gallant's prowess to the total of the score for which they expected to secure settlement in full without further delay.

"'Ee 's an 'ansome pusson, hain't 'ee?" remarked one facetious individual in the front rank of the crowd assembled at the bottom step.

"A blooming Prince Charmin'," assented a heavy-browed ruffian, resting his great cudgel on the railing. "Oh, but he are n't a circumstance to what he will look when we have altered his countenance a bit."

"It stroikes me the spalpeen has been powdering his mug," growled Sweeny, his little eyes blazing with a ferocious light. His lips, damp and red, were wolf-like as his tusk-shaped and scattered teeth bit deep into them in his rage. "He 's pale loike."

"Watch! Watch!"

"Call, sorr, call. It 's no good the watch will do yez this noight. Ye 'll git a bating now that ye will carry the marks of to your dying day."

"I 'd rather be excused, sir," replied the gentleman, coolly. "Unless I mistake, I have not the honor of your acquaintance."

"I 'm Sweeny, Jane's father."

"Indeed? How do you do, Mr. Sweeny?" politely inquired the girl's admirer.

"I 'll be better when I 've pounded you to a pulp," growled the old Irishman, taking a new and firmer grip on the club he held.

"Then why delay, friends? Let us have it over with at once," suggested the hunted gentleman, smiling as pleasantly as though he were inviting divers acquaintances to partake of biscuits and tea.

"Bli' me, hif 'ee ain't a well-plucked cove," said the lad with the bottle.

A murmur of admiring assent ran through the crowd. It would be much greater sport to beat so valiant a gentleman to death than to thrash a low-spirited coward such as they had anticipated encountering. These worthy and unworthy denizens of

poverty-stricken dwellings, for in the assemblage there were both honest and dishonest, like most of their rank in society, were firm believers in the theory that fine clothes and a high-bred manner were reliable indications of a cowardly spirit and physical weakness. To so suddenly have their ideas on this subject proved incorrect was a surprise more startling than would be at first imagined.

Sweeny felt that his followers were wavering in their allegiance, and fearing lest further delay might result in a behavior on their part unsatisfactory to him personally, he gave a growl of wrath and rushed fiercely up the steps waving his cudgel. The gentleman calmly and skilfully kicked him in the mouth and sent him hurling backward down on the heads of his friends, bloodstained and well nigh insensible. This bit of battle decided the action of the mob, and, excited by the sight of their leader's blood, they pressed resolutely up the steps. It was quite impossible for the hunted gallant to beat back such a force as was now attacking him, and, fully realizing this, he made no such attempt. Instead, he tore his cloak from about his shoulders and threw it over the heads of the foremost of his opponents, leaped quickly on the railing of the steps and sprang wildly and hopelessly towards the parallel flight which led to the front door of the adjacent house. He reached the rail with his hands, but his weight was too much for him when coupled with the terrible force with which his body struck the side of the steps, so, with a groan of despair, he fell in the areaway. He tumbled feet first on a grating leading to the cellar of the house, which gave way and precipitated him into the depths below, as his pur-

suers, mad with the excitement of the chase, rushed down the stairs from which he had made his daring leap. It looked as though it might go hard with the unknown gentleman, valiant and resourceful though he had proven himself.

Chapter Twenty-Six

TOM MOORE'S SERVANT PROVES A FRIEND IN NEED

BUSTER ate a hearty supper and fed Lord Castlereagh with the scraps. This done, he was about to proceed with the dish-washing, a kind of toil for which he had a more than ordinary contempt and dislike, when the sound of shouting in the street attracted his attention.

For once in his life the boy had failed to ascertain the news of the neighborhood of that day, and as he had been absent when Mrs. Malone conveyed to his master the intelligence of Sweeny's purposed ambush of Jane's unknown swain, he had had no tidings concerning that important happening, so was not the active participant in the adventure that he would otherwise have been. This being the case, he was quite at a loss to account for the sounds of tumult below.

"My heye!" he remarked to the bulldog, whose curiosity was similarly aroused, "wot a rumpussin'. Who 's getting beat hor married, Hi wonders?"

Sticking his head out of the window, the boy could discern nothing down in the dark street. It was quite evident that the voices which had attracted his attention proceeded from one of the narrow lanes running at right angles to the larger thoroughfare on which the lodgings of Moore fronted.

"Somebody 's risin' a bloody hole row, your lordship. Well, we keeps hout of it this once, don't we?"

The bulldog gave a whine of dissent. He saw no reason for remaining quiet when such unexcelled opportunities for vigorous contention were being offered gratuitously below.

Buster shook his head sadly.

"Halas!" he observed in a melancholy tone. "That hole gladheateral spirit hof yourn his never horf tap. You h'are a blooming hole pugilist, that 's wot you h'are. You horter be hashamed of yourself for wantin' to happropriate somebody else's private row."

Lord Castlereagh felt unjustly rebuked and retired to his favorite corner, apparently losing all interest in the hubbub, which continued below, growing gradually less noisy as though the cause were slowly departing from the immediate neighborhood. Suddenly the dog's quick ear detected an unwonted sound coming from the rooftops, and with a growl, spurred on by his still unsatisfied curiosity, he ran across the room to the window by which his master in the old days had been wont to evade the vigilance of Mrs. Malone. Buster followed him, and, looking across the undulating surface made by the irregular roofs, — a sort of architectural sea rendered choppy by uplifting ridge-poles and gables of various styles, cut into high waves and low troughs by the dissimilar heights of sundry buildings, with chimneys rising buoy-like from the billowy depths, which in the darkness were blended softly together by the mellowing and connecting shadows, — he saw the figure of a man emerge from the scuttle of a roof perhaps two hundred feet distant. At the same moment there came a howl of

fury from the street below, which grew louder, as though the crowd from which it emanated were streaming back in the direction of Mrs. Malone's residence. The fugitive, for that he was such could not be doubted, beat a hurried retreat across the roofs, tripping, falling, crawling, but ever making progress and nearly always hidden from the point at which he had effected his entrance to the house-tops by the friendly shelter of intervening chimneys and gables. All at once a burly form leaped out of the scuttle from which the first comer had emerged. This newly arrived individual carried a club and was followed out on the roof by half-a-dozen companions of the same ilk. Straightening up to his full height, while gingerly balancing on the nearest ridgepole, the fellow caught a glimpse of their prey crawling up a steep roof quite a little distance further on towards the window from which Buster was now intently watching the chase.

"There he goes, lads. He is right in line with that tallest chimbley," bellowed the leader.

"Aye, aye! After him! After him!"

An answering howl came from the street, and, sliding, running and stumbling, the pursuers began to follow the fugitive across the housetops. Then they lost sight of him, and for a while completely baffled, searched in a scattered line, slowly advancing, investigating each possible hiding-place as they came to it, urged on by the growling of the mob patrolling the street below. Suddenly one of their number, the lad armed with the huge bottle, tripped over a broken clothesline and fell headlong into the V-shaped trough formed by the eaves of the two adjacent houses. He found himself rudely precipitated on the body of the

hunted man, who had lain snugly concealed at the very bottom of the roof-made angle, but before he could do more than utter one choking scream, the fugitive, despairing of further concealment, silenced his discoverer with his fist, and with the rest of the pack in full cry at his heels, began again his wild flight over the roofs. Fortune favored him once more, and the band hunting him was forced for a second time to pause and scatter in close scrutiny of the ground over which the fleeing gallant had made his way. Then Buster saw a tall figure creep out of the gloom cast by a huge chimney, which, shadowing a roof near by, had enabled him to crawl undetected from the hiding-place that he had found beneath the eaves of an unusually tall building, near the house from the attic of which the boy was now excitedly tracing his line of flight. Buster's sympathy was all with the fleeing man. To sympathize was to act, and having found the rope-ladder which used to serve his master as a means of exit by the window when prudence dictated such an evasion, he tumbled it out, at the same time attracting the hunted gentleman's attention with a friendly hiss.

"This w'y, sir, this w'y," whispered Buster, silencing the threatened outcry of Lord Castlereagh with a commanding gesture. "Keep low has you can till you gets 'ere. The big chimbley 'll keep 'em from seeing you till you 're safe hup, sir."

Crawling rapidly along on his hands and knees, the much-sought gentleman managed to gain the necessary distance without being discovered, and sheltered by the grim outlines of the huge chimney Buster had indicated, he climbed laboriously up the ladder to the window of Moore's attic. The boy held out a welcom-

ing hand and assisted him to enter. Once in, the stranger gave a sobbing sigh of relief, and groped his way to a chair. The moon, till now providentially bedimmed, came out from behind the froth of clouds and the light entering the window fell full on the new-comer's flushed face.

"Blow me!" cried the boy in astonishment. "Hif it hain't the Prince hof Wyles!"

Chapter Twenty-Seven

THE POET REGAINS ROYAL FAVOR

"YOU know me?"

"Hi just does, your 'Ighness," replied the boy, dragging up the ladder as he spoke. This he deposited in its usual hiding-place before turning to his royal guest, who was still panting from the exertion of his flight.

"Put out the light," directed the Prince, pointing to the candles on the mantel.

"Ho, no, your 'Ighness. That 'd make them suspicious," dissented Buster.

"Perhaps you are right," said Wales, reflectively.

"Per'aps Hi his," admitted the boy. "Hi ain't hallus wrong, you know, your 'Ighness."

"What place is this, my lad?"

"This," replied Buster, grandiloquently, "his the palatial residence of the famous poet, Mr. Thomas Moore."

"Moore!" repeated the Prince in astonishment. "Fatality pursues me."

"Hif that 's wot wuz harter you Hi don't wonder you cut stick," said the boy, cautiously peering out of the window.

"To while away a tedious evening I sometimes assume a disguise such as my present adornment and

go out in search of adventures," said Wales, condescending to explain his present predicament.

"Yessir," said Buster, "Hi knows Jine Sweeny myself. You h'are the pusson Hi saw with 'er the hother night."

"Did you recognize me?"

"Not then, sir, your 'at wuz pulled too low."

"Perhaps you knew that a demonstration was being prepared in my honor this evening?"

"Not I, your 'Ighness. Ho law! but hit 's lucky Hi saw you. They 'd likely have beat your 'ead horf you, your Majesty."

"That seemed to be their intention," assented Wales, "nor have they yet abandoned the idea, if I interpret their present activity correctly."

"Hif they manages to trice you 'ere, wot 'll we do?" demanded Buster, as the sounds on the roofs outside drew nearer.

"What would you suggest?" asked the Prince, quite calmly.

"You 'd 'ave to tell 'em who you are."

"Ah!" said Wales, doubtfully, "but would they believe me? Hardly, my good lad."

"Hush, your 'Ighness, they are near hat 'and."

The inmates of the garret could now plainly hear the scuffling steps of the men on the nearest roof as they slid and slipped on the inclines.

"Where the h—l can he have gone ter?" queried a piping voice.

"That 's the wine merchant's clark," announced Buster to the Prince.

"Yes? What did you say his name was?"

"Hi did n't s'y," replied the boy guardedly.

Wales laughed pleasantly.

"You are a wise lad," said he. "What are they doing now?"

"You 've got 'em puzzled, your 'Ighness. They his puttin' their bloomink 'eads together. Now they 're a 'untin' agin."

"No trace of him here."

"He came this way, I 'll swear."

"Three he has put his mark on this night. Sweeny, Isaac, and Welch's Will."

"Will?"

"Aye, the lad with the bottle. He 's lying out on the eaves yet."

Buster gave his guest an admiring look. Such prowess was deserving of all commendation. Wales caught the glance, and chuckled softly. Whatever shortcomings might be laid at the door of the gentleman destined to be the fourth George, cowardice was not one of them.

"Never mind, lads," said another voice. "He cawn't git away. The street is watched and all we have to do is to hunt him up."

"We hain't a doin' hit. Hat least not has I sees."

"Stop your croaking, Blount. D' ye think he could climb to that window?"

"Now for it," murmured Wales.

"Naw, 'ee hain't no bloomin' bird to fly hup ten foot o' wall, his 'ee?"

"Scatter, then. That way there, over to the right."

In obedience to this instruction the party were heard moving off with uncertain steps and Buster turned away from the window with a sigh of relief.

"Hi fawncies you 're sife, your Majesty," said he.

"Agreeable intelligence, I must admit," sighed the Prince, assuming an easier position. "My subjects possess the virtue of persistence."

"Yessir, they dearly loves to club a swell cove hif they think 'ee his arfter their lydies."

Steps sounded in the hallway and the Prince rose quietly to his feet, prepared to renew the struggle.

"Don't be halarmed, your 'Ighness," said Buster, reassuringly. "Hit 's only Mr. Moore returning."

"Do not acquaint him with my presence," said Wales. "I will make myself known when I think best."

"Yes, your 'Ighness."

The Prince stepped behind the curtain separating the poet's bedchamber from the sitting-room and there awaited developments in silence. Moore opened the door and ushered in Mr. Dyke.

"I thought Bessie was here," he said in surprise as he noted her absence.

"Mistress Dyke went down to hinterview Mrs. Malone, sir," explained Buster, in a quandary as to how he should act. A prince, of course, could not be lightly disobeyed, but at the same time he felt qualms at the thought of what his master, not suspecting the presence of royalty, might chance to say.

Moore solved the problem for him unknowingly.

"Then go down," said he to Buster, "and tell my future wife that her former father is here."

Buster, relieved at the removal of responsibility, quickly left the room. Mr. Dyke looked around at the bare, unsightly walls and sadly shook his head.

"To think I should bring you to this, Thomas," he said, remorsefully.

"Sit down, Mr. Dyke, and have done with lamentations. So long as I do not complain, you surely have no reason to find fault," said Moore, cheerily.

"No, Thomas, I feel I must confess the truth to the Prince."

"What nonsense," said Moore, firmly. "No, no, Mr. Dyke, for you to confess that you wrote the poem satirizing his Highness would be the height of folly. I doubt if it would do me any good, and it certainly would completely ruin you."

"I know," began the old man, but Moore interrupted him.

"I much prefer things as they are," he said. "Allow me to choose, Mr. Dyke."

"You do not know the pangs of conscience I have suffered."

"More likely it was indigestion, sir."

"You took the blame for my folly. I went free, but your brilliant career was cut short."

"Very short," admitted the poet, who was seated on the table, comfortably swinging his legs. "But the shortening is frequently the most important part of the dish."

"Your rising star was plucked cruelly from the sky before reaching its zenith."

"Between friends, you can omit the poetry," suggested Moore. "It seems like talking shop if I may say so without offence."

"I see you are resolved," said the old man weakly.

"Ah, yes," replied the poet, jumping off the table, and approaching his future father-in-law, he laid his hand kindly on the old man's shoulder.

"It is all for the best, sir," he went on with a sin-

cerity that was convincing. "I did not know, I was not sure, that your daughter loved me. She, bless her pretty head, was too full of life and laughter to read her own heart. My adversity has brought her to me with outstretched arms and a love more tender, more true, than even I dreamed it could be. No, no, sir. Keep your mouth shut to please me."

"It is really your wish that I do this?"

"Sure it is," replied Moore, satisfied that he had carried his point.

"But the Prince, Tom?"

Moore's face saddened, but he rid himself of his regret with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Poor man," he said. "He thinks harshly of me, no doubt. Ah, well, perhaps it is better so, Mr. Dyke. And yet I 'd be easier in my mind if he knew how I regard him. I have no feelings save those of friendship and gratitude in my heart for him but he 'll never know."

"Yours is a generous soul, Thomas."

"To-night I can say as truly and fondly as on that evening his favor plucked me from poverty and failure, 'God bless the Prince Regent.'"

"It is needless to say I echo that sentiment, Mr. Moore."

Moore turned with a low cry. The Prince had stepped noiselessly from behind the curtain to the centre of the room, and stood with a smile on his face, enjoying his involuntary host's surprise.

"Your Highness," stammered Moore, for once thoroughly abashed. "Your Highness!"

"Aye, Wales himself. Good evening, Mr. Dyke. It seems that I have wronged you, Moore."

"Your Highness heard?"

"Every word, gentlemen."

"I am not sorry," said Mr. Dyke, softly.

"But," said Moore, rallying from his astonishment, "how came your Highness here?"

The Prince's eyes twinkled, but his face was grave, almost solemn.

"For that information, sir, I must refer you to your neighbor, one Mr. Sweeny."

"Then you, sir, are the gay spark?"

"No doubt a spark, since I shall make light of my adventure, but in reality not so very gay."

Bessie came hurrying along the hall and flinging open the door entered breathlessly.

"Oh, Tom, Tom," she cried. "The hall below is full of men. They are searching for the strange gallant who won Jane Sweeny from the grocer's son."

The Prince took a pinch of snuff.

"Egad!" said he. "A remarkable achievement, it seems. I 'm beginning to be proud of it."

"The Prince!" exclaimed the girl in amazement.

"An uninvited guest, Mistress Dyke," said his Highness, jovially.

"And therefore doubly welcome, sir," returned Moore, at the door listening to the murmur that came from below. "Your Highness, they are coming up I am afraid. They have traced you here."

"Devilish awkward," muttered the Prince, looking around for a weapon; "I shall have to fight, I fancy."

"No, no," said Moore. "That is no way to get out of this mess. We would be beaten down in a moment."

"*We?*"

"Aye, Sire, Mr. Dyke, you and I. I have a better scheme, if you will trust yourself to me."

"I prefer you to our friends."

"Then hide in the next room," said the poet, drawing back the curtain. "I 'll get them off your track or my name is not Tom Moore. Whatever you hear, don't stir out, your Highness."

Buster entered in a rush.

"Ho, sir," he panted, "the 'ole parcel hof 'em his a-coming hup!"

"Hush!" said Moore. "This way, Sire."

Wales obeyed his host's instructions and vanished in the adjoining room, his manner still cool and unruffled.

"Buster, can you lose those rascals in a chase over the roofs?"

"Hi can, sir," replied the boy valiantly. "Hi 'll give 'em such a run has they reads habout hin their primers."

Moore tossed him an old hat and coat from the cupboard.

"The way is clear, lad," he said, peering out the window. "Out with you and when I whistle show yourself somewhere and then run like the devil. When you are tired, drop your hat and coat and you 'll be safe."

"Drop nothing," said Buster. "Hi knows too much to be guilty hof hany such shocking waste as that."

He hurried out of the window, landing on the roof below as lightly as any cat, as the sound of the approaching mob grew louder. There was but little time to spare, and Moore wasted none of it.

"Bessie," he commanded, "lock the door behind us

when we go out in the hall. When I sing, you scream for help at the top of your voice. Then, whatever I say swear to like a darlin'. Come, Mr. Dyke."

Moore grabbed the old gentleman by the arm and hurried him out in the hall as the first of Wales' pursuers set foot on the flight of stairs leading to the attic.

"The Harp that once thro' Tara's halls
The soul of music shed,
Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls,
As if that soul —"

A woman's scream rang through the house.

"Help! Help! Tom! Help!"

"Bang!" went the locked door, kicked in by Moore, who rushed into the room with a yell, followed by Mr. Dyke.

"Out of the way, darlin'," he whispered to Bessie. "I 've got to give myself an awful flaking."

Immediately the poet began a struggle all over the room with an imaginary adversary.

"You would, would you?" he shouted at the top of his lungs. "Then take that, you raparee! And that, and *that*. Help! Mr. Dyke! My, but he is strong."

He seized the table and upset it, then danced around the room like one possessed, dealing terrific blows to the air. He clutched the contents of the cupboard and sent the china crashing in fragments on the floor. The chairs he beat up and down and back and forth against the walls. For all the world it sounded as though a mad bull were rushing around the room dealing destruction on every side. Then he put his fist through two panes of glass and paused in his performance,

standing by the window with heaving chest as the mob led by Sweeny rushed into the attic.

"Oh, friends," he cried between gasps, "you come too late."

"Too late for what, Mr. Moore?"

"To help me, you spalpeens. A big devil, six feet and a half high and a mile broad — I mean a mile high and six feet broad — Oh, a curst big lump of a lad — climbed into the window and laid violent hands on this lady, my future wife, who was here alone — "

"The strange laddybuck," cried Sweeny. "The omadhaun we 're afther now."

"He locked the door so I could n't get in and laid hold of her. Did n't he, Bessie?"

The girl lied shamelessly.

"And I screamed," she finished, glad to add a little truth to her falsehood.

"I kicked in the door and grabbed the villain. Mr. Dyke and I both grappled with him, but he was too much for us and beat us down and leaped out on the roof."

The crowd surged up to the window with a howl of rage, and Buster bobbed into view on a distant gable.

"There he is now," cried Dabble, who was one of the mob.

"Aye, aye, after him."

Sweeny took command.

"You four, Dabble, Blount, Williams and Lake, out of the window and over the roofs again. The rest of us will guard every door in the neighborhood."

The chosen four dropped from the window, and the crowd, Sweeny still in the lead, rushed out and down-

stairs as frantically as they had come up, leaving the attic to Moore and his guests. The poet sat down on an upset chair and breathed a sigh of relief.

"It 's a comedian I am," said he. "Bessie, how does Drury Lane do without me?"

"I don't know," said the girl. "I am sure I could n't."

"My, oh, my!" panted Moore, "but you are learning the right things to say at the right time very quickly, Bessie."

The Prince emerged from his hiding-place.

"Bravely done, Mr. Moore," said he, laughing a little. "Egad, I 'd not trade this evening for any other in my experience."

"No?" asked Moore.

"Not I, sir. You rid us of them very neatly."

"For a while, your Highness. They may return."

"True," said Wales, "so we had best lose no time in getting help."

"Your Highness is right," said the poet, beginning to restore the room to something like its old appearance. "Father-in-law, run out and — "

"Let me arrange this," interrupted the Prince. "Mr. Dyke, if you will carry this ring to the house of Sir Percival Lovelace, you will find him at supper. Tell him of my predicament and say I bid him take such steps as he may deem best to extricate me from this misadventure without betraying my identity."

Mr. Dyke took the ring held out to him by the Prince.

"I 'll make haste," he said, and toddled out and down the stairs as fast as his legs could carry him.

Wales accepted the chair which Moore placed for him.

"Sir," said he, "you have a talent for intrigue."

"Ah, Sire," said Moore, ingenuously, "if it were not disrespectful, I would return the compliment. Your Highness must have passed an exciting evening."

"Quite true, Mr. Moore, but I fancy I can do without such excitement in the future."

"I rejoice to hear you say that, your Highness," said Moore, sincerely.

"Indeed, Mr. Moore? And why so, if I may ask."

"Because," said the poet so winningly that it was quite impossible for even a prince of the blood to take offence, "'The First Gentleman of Europe' is too proud a title to be lightly risked."

Wales grew red and bit his lip.

"I accept your reproof," he said. "It is not undeserved."

"Not reproof, your Highness. Friendly advice, nothing more."

"As you would have it, Mr. Moore," responded the Prince, wearily.

Meanwhile Bessie had found the teapot to be one exception to the general ruin wrought of Moore's household utensils.

"Would it please your Highness to have a cup of tea?" she asked, timidly.

"It will delight me much, Mistress Dyke. May I inquire when you intend to honor Mr. Moore by becoming his wife?"

Bessie flushed up prettily and looked at her lover.

"The wedding would take place to-morrow if I could afford it," said Moore, righting the table and brushing it off with his coat-tail.

"Then I take it you cannot afford it?" said his Highness.

"Not just at present," said Moore, cheerily. "I trust your health continues to be of the best, your Highness?"

"I thank you, yes, but I have heard no such singing in my favorite drawing-rooms as when you were wont to frequent the haunts of the *beau monde.*"

"I have been out of town," said Moore, calmly, as Bessie brought the tea to the Prince in a cup which had escaped the general smash-up. The Prince sipped its contents in high good humor.

"Delicious, Mistress Dyke," he declared, "your husband will be a fortunate individual."

"There is but one grief which intrudes itself upon his happiness," said the girl, tremulously, "the disfavor of the Prince, who in his darkest hour won from him both love and gratitude by his generosity."

"Hush, Bessie," said Moore. "His Highness has enough to think of, dearest."

"By the way, Moore," said Wales, languidly, "did I not hear some mention made of your name in connection with a political position in Bermuda?"

"You are right, your Highness," replied Moore, reluctantly, "there was some such mention made."

The Prince looked thoughtful and drained his cup.

"Bermuda," said he, "is a long way from England, Mr. Moore."

A step sounded on the stairs at this moment, and Moore gladly rid himself of the embarrassment he felt by approaching the door to make certain it was no undesirable personage who was now approaching.

"Lord Brooking!" he cried. "What good luck brings you back?"

"I soon wearied of the theatricals and was out for a stroll when by chance I encountered Mr. Dyke on his way to Sir Percival's," explained the young nobleman entering. "It is needless to say, your Highness, I made haste to join you here."

"But," said Wales, "did the good citizens not stop you on your way?"

"For a moment or two, your Highness, but I convinced them of my entire harmlessness and was allowed to pass."

"Is Mr. Moore at home?" demanded a hoarse voice, strongly flavored with Scotch dialect, from the hall below.

"McDermot," exclaimed Moore. "What can the old vagabond want with me to-night?"

"If I am not mistaken, Tom, this is the old bloodsucker who is to be your future publisher?" said Lord Brooking.

"For life," responded Moore. "You remember I told you of our bargain not two hours ago. Yes, I am in, Mr. McDermot."

"Well then I 'll coom up," announced the publisher.

Moore was about to advise him not to when a gesture from Lord Brooking led him to desist.

"Pardon me, your Highness," said Lord Brooking, "but for certain reasons I deem it better that this gentleman should not recognize you when he first comes in."

"I 'll look at the view, then," said the Regent, pleasantly.

By the time Wales had reached the window, wisely

choosing the one which opened upon the street, for there still came sounds of distant chase from the roofs, McDermot was knocking on the door.

"Come in," called Moore.

The old Scotchman entered in a great rage.

"So I ha' caught ye at last?" he shouted at sight of the poet.

"Have it your own way, sir."

"Six times ha' I called here, sair, ye trickster, ye cheat."

"Hold on now," said Moore, in sudden anger, "you are an old man, but more than enough of such talk is a great deal too much."

Bessie laid a restraining hand on Moore's arm.

"Perhaps, Mr. McDermot, you will be kind enough to state your grievance," she said, quietly.

"It 's aboot the contract," sputtered the irate publisher.

"Is n't that all right?" asked Moore, wonderingly. "I signed it."

"Of coorse ye did, ye trickster, but ye did not tell me when ye called to do so that the evening before ye had been shamefully ejected from Sir Percival's house by order o' the Prince of Wales."

"Surely that was Sir Percival's business," replied Moore. "He may have been proud of the affair; I was n't."

"Ye should ha' told me," repeated McDermot, doggedly.

"But I did n't know you were so interested in my goings and comings."

"You took my thousand poonds."

"Was that wrong?" asked Moore.

"Wrong?" echoed the publisher. "D'ye think I'd give ye ten shillings for ye skin?"

"See here," cried Moore, his anger again getting the better of him, "my skin is not for sale, but, if you value yours, you had better keep a civil tongue in your head, you old Rob Roy."

Lord Brooking stepped forward between the two angry men.

"Am I right in believing that you are dissatisfied with your bargain, Mr. McDermot?" said he in a soothing tone.

"Dissatisfied? *Dissatisfied!* Why, at the present time Mr. Moore is the very worst investment in the literary market."

Brooking waved Moore back with an admonishing gesture.

"Then I take it you would be glad to cancel the agreement?" he continued.

"But my thousand poonds?"

"I will advance Moore the money to repay you. Of course it is a risk, but for the sake of old times I will assume the obligation. Do you need other security than my word?"

"Not I," said McDermot, gladly. "There is your contract, Mr. Moore."

As he spoke he took the paper from his pocket and tore it into fragments. These he carefully deposited on the table and turned to go.

"One moment, Mr. McDermot," said an imperious voice.

The Prince came forward with an air of chilling dignity.

"You have made the greatest mistake of your life,

sir," he continued, addressing the astounded publisher. "This I will show you if you listen. Mr. Moore, you and your fiancée have been little seen of late in the world of fashion. Pray alter this, my dear fellow. Furthermore you may as well abandon all idea of holding office in Bermuda save by deputy. It is impossible for the Poet Laureate of England to reside at such a distance from Carlton House."

"Sir!" cried Moore, unable to believe his ears. "Poet Laureate?"

"One Thomas Moore, not unknown to the literary world, an Irishman of some wit and fancy. Mr. McDermot, we need detain you no longer."

Crestfallen, the old Scotchman crept from the room as Moore turned to Bessie almost too happy to speak.

"You heard?"

She nodded her head, her eyes filling with happy tears.

There was a clatter in the street and a closed carriage drew up in front of Mrs. Malone's. Following it came a dozen hussars, riding gaily, as though in hope of a skirmish. Sir Percival Lovelace and Mr. Dyke alighted and hurried upstairs, while Sweeny and his adherents contemplated the soldiers from the safety of distance in melancholy grandeur.

"I have been waiting for you, Sir Percival," said the Prince.

"Yet I made all possible haste," said Sir Percival, bowing low to Bessie. "By good luck, Farquar of the Tenth Hussars was dining with me. A word to him brought me a dozen stout lads, and with them for escort I hurried here."

"Will Farquar keep a still tongue?" inquired Wales, more anxious than he appeared.

"Trust him for that, your Highness," replied Sir Percival, confidently.

"I think I will have to, Lovelace," observed the Prince, dryly. "Mr. Moore, I have only to thank you for your kindly hospitality. I shall expect you at Carlton House in the morning. Mistress Dyke, Tom is indeed a lucky man. As for you, Mr. Dyke, I only await your promise not to repeat the offence to overlook the error into which you fell some weeks ago. Good night, my friends — Stay! I would not leave your clever lad unrewarded. Give him this and tell him if he ever sees fit to quit your service he will not find Wales ungrateful."

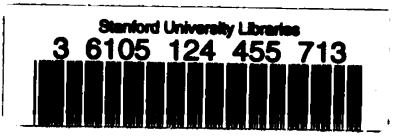
As he spoke, the Prince took the ring which Sir Percival held out to him. Handing it to Moore, he turned and bowed himself out, followed by the baronet.

"Capital," said Lord Brooking, joyfully. "I knew you 'd not languish in disfavor long, Tom. Ask Mistress Bessie to name the day."

Moore stepped to his sweetheart's side.

"When will you become my wife, dearest?" he asked, love sounding in his voice and gleaming in his eyes.

"I will marry you to-morrow," she whispered softly, her arms around his neck.



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